



OUR SHARED MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY

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In my new role as President of Global Youth Initiative (GYI) and with the relaunch of Sonlife Classic in North America, one of my four priorities is that of developing a deepened appreciation and understanding of our shared ministry Christology. Each new generation of younger leaders requires an intentional effort at passing on this shared ministry philosophy—especially that which is biblically-based and cross-cultural.

This paper (an overview of shared ministry philosophy) is my feeble attempt to capture the high points of this philosophy in writing and to stimulate discussion. It is my prayer that through discussion together, we can arrive at a renewed appreciation for the values that have brought us together.

In GYI, our mission statement is “equipping young leaders for movements of multiplication.” Our vision is that of seeing “a movement of God among the youth of the globe...displaying the wonders of God to the next generation” (Psa. 78:3-7).

This paper was hard to write, because it is an overview, and not exhaustive in any one area. While this started as a document emphasizing what we are “sure of,” it ends with the asking of many questions that I’m “unsure about.” Therefore, up front, I have to admit that my purposes in this paper shifted the more I wrote. Forgive me for this movement away from simply addressing fixed beliefs to raising questions for future discussions. I will also admit I vacillated in my writing style.

I would like to admit as well that this paper is not a research paper with extensive documentation (as most of my previous GYI papers), but instead a reflective paper trying to capture some of our most firmly held beliefs and putting them in writing for more discussion and clarity for those new to the cause of Global Youth Initiative.

A CORE CONVICTION

From the very beginning in developing a training organization for leaders, I have held the deep conviction that developing emerging leaders involves a unique understanding of leadership development. Equipping leaders differs from equipping workers and/or believers. Leadership development involves the unique task of developing “thinkers” and not just “doers.” Leaders need to ask “why” questions, workers tend to ask “how” questions, and believers tend to think in terms of “what” issue (what am I to do next, etc.).

The biblical terms for a New Testament leader are overseer, shepherd, bishop or elder. These terms are used interchangeably (1 Pet. 5:1-4) in the New Testament and are words used to define New Testament leadership. An overseer, by very nature of the definition, is supposed to oversee a ministry. An overseer must be able to frame up the major “why” questions: Why are we doing this? Why is this a priority?

A biblical philosophy with transferable principles is cross-cultural, whereas programs and curriculum are wrapped up in too many cultural and contextual issues.

With this framework, let me humbly try to capture some of those critical principles and values that frame up the ministry philosophy of GYL. For discussion's sake I have wrapped them into twelve statements. They are:

- Jesus is our model
- Disciple-making is our mission
- Love is our motive
- The organic process is our method
- The Holy Spirit is our means
- Fruit is our measure
- The Gospel remains our message
- The church is the movement
- Youth are our mandate
- Relationships are our momentum
- Leading Servants is our motto
- Kingdom obedience is our distinctive mark

1. JESUS IS OUR MODEL

It almost seems strange to argue for Jesus as our model of ministry. Doesn't everyone use Jesus as his or her model?

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is *no*. Everyone doesn't use Jesus as his or her model for ministry. While it is true that most everyone will talk about Jesus, quote from Jesus or teach what Jesus taught, my experience is that *few* make the character and priorities of Jesus their model for ministry.

Through the years, I have found some who believe that Jesus should *not* be our model for ministry. The church, they argue, began in the book of Acts (a new dispensation or covenant) and therefore Jesus should not be used as our model. Instead, Paul or Peter or the epistles better explain how to do ministry. Unfortunately, the limited scope of this paper does not allow me to fully refute this position, except to simply state that Jesus planted the first church, commissioned His disciples to do what He did, and then sent them out to make disciples of all nations, following the pattern that He gave them. Paul understood this when he told his followers to "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

Through the years, I have also found many who believe that there are many *principles* from Jesus that can be used in ministry. These principles are often cited and then a few verses from the life of Christ put behind them. Most in this position would not argue with using the life of Christ as our model, but they would never think of *making* Jesus their *primary* model for ministry. For some reason, this just doesn't occur to them as the right thing to do—mostly because He was God and we are not.

However, the larger segment of the body of Christ simply uses the *message* of Jesus, thinking that by doing this they are following the model of Jesus. May I suggest that the message of Jesus minus the methods of Jesus does not reflect the true mandate of Jesus? Jesus was very clear, "do the works I have been doing" (John 14:12), "live as [I] did" (1 John 2:6), and follow the pattern I have given you (as seen in the 30+ "just as" verses in the Gospels).

It is my conviction that, while many have focused on the principles or message of Jesus, most have failed to capture the full-orbed philosophy of ministry that Jesus modeled and then commanded us to follow. Disciple-making (not discipleship), flowing out of a deep love for God and a love for people, was not a great idea or suggestion, but the Great Command (Matt. 22, 28). We are to do what Jesus did—extending this to all people groups, and then He will return (Matt. 24:14).

Jesus is our model for ministry. In His humanity, Jesus was man as God intended man to be. As Charles Ryrie has said, “Never less than God, He chose to live His life never more than man.” Bruce Ware added, “His deity was unexpressed, so that His humanity could be fully expressed.” Wayne Grudem put it this way, “Jesus refused to rely on his divine nature to make obedience easier for him.” In other words, Jesus in His humanity became our model for ministry. He became what He was not, so that we could become what we were not. He modeled how to create a movement of multiplying disciples and then commanded us to do what He did the way He did it. A proper understanding of His *personal* calling (dying for our sins), coupled with his *ministry* calling (making disciples who could make disciples) helps us grasp this implication. Unfortunately, many have not understood the humanity of Jesus and have, knowingly or unknowingly, concluded that we cannot do what Jesus did. Therefore, why even try? Yet He commanded us to do what He did, even telling us that we would do greater things than He has done (John 14:12)! In four years, Jesus developed up to 120 disciples, 70 workers and 11 leaders. By God’s grace, we may have up to forty years of making disciples, having the capacity of making even more disciples because of the greater amount of time available, if we walk as He walked! (I have written in more detail on the humanity of Jesus and its implications in other articles such as “The Humanity of Jesus” and “The Life of Christ: The Cost of Leading Movements of Multiplication.” You can find these in the store at sonlifeclassic.com).

To adequately say that Jesus is our model of ministry means that we capture both the character and priorities of Jesus. We must continually work to go deeper in His philosophy of ministry and the guiding principles He lived by. Anything less would be just quoting from His message or making a few verses from the Gospels prooftexts to make us feel good about being like Jesus. Anything less than “doing what Jesus did” the “way Jesus did it” is doing a disservice to the life and ministry of Jesus. It is not the real Jesus of the New Testament, as He didn’t give us the option of just teaching His messages. He commanded us to do what He did and to do it the way He did it. Anything less is not a full-orbed philosophy of ministry that is biblically rooted in the life of Christ.

Let me say it again—Jesus is our model for ministry. We must never tire of calling the next generation to “walk as Jesus walked,” no matter how basic this may feel at times, especially to those of us who have spent years training in these basics. Remember the very first time you heard the life of Christ taught as a biblical philosophy of ministry? We must make sure that each new generation of young leaders has the chance to clearly grasp the Son’s life. We cannot let these values get lost or it can take several generations to recapture them.

For further discussion:

- Why are so few involved in a study of Christology as it relates to ecclesiology?
- What can be distorted in the statement that Jesus is our model of ministry?
- What is difficult about defining the philosophy of ministry Jesus modeled?
- In the life of Christ, what needs further discussion and study?
- What happens when your ecclesiology is not rooted in good Christology?

- Why is it easy to slip away from teaching the basics of disciple-making?
- Others:

2. DISCIPLE-MAKING IS OUR MISSION (THE GREAT COMMISSION)

Step back into the first century for a moment and place yourselves in the context of the initial followers of Jesus. First, you have the book of James, and then possibly you are given Galatians. But it is almost twenty years after Christ's death before you receive a summary of Christ's life in the Gospel of Matthew (A.D. 50). Once Matthew is written, it will be almost ten years before you have the gospel of Luke (A.D. 60), then almost another ten years later for the Gospel of Mark (A.D. 68). Then finally, almost twenty years after, if you are still alive, you are given the Gospel of John (A.D. 85-90). Imagine what it would be like to be given a first-hand story of Jesus for the first time. Imagine reading that account and then coming towards the end of that Gospel and reading what you have heard others say so often: "Therefore, 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Matthew captures those emotional last moments that Jesus has with His disciples. Over the previous forty days, Jesus has appeared to His disciples ten times. Five of these appearances were in Jerusalem behind locked doors. Only one of these appearances was pre-announced. In Matthew 26:32 and 28:7, Jesus told His disciples to go ahead and meet Him at Galilee. Because of this announcement, I believe that Matthew 28 was the first pre-announced appearance of Jesus where five hundred were gathered (1 Cor. 15:6). There was excitement in the air and great anticipation: "When they saw him they worshipped him..." (Matt. 28:17). Jesus was clear that all authority had been given to Him, and they were to go to all nations—and He would be with them always. This Great Commission was *all-inclusive*.

I believe that Matthew 28 is a summary of Jesus' life. One more time, at the end of His life—so that they would never forget it—He told them to do what He had been doing. He said, "Therefore, 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 I have commanded you." The one command is clear—to make disciples. The three participial phrases (going, baptizing and teaching to obey) tell us how to fulfill the command. In these words, Jesus simply reminds them what His life was about, and then commands His disciples to do what He had done, to make disciples who can make disciples. This they understood. They had seen Jesus do this. They were recipients of this focused mission. He now extends that mission to them—and to us.

This Great Commission clearly frames up our mission. The one command of the Great Commission is to "make disciples" (the Greek "matheteusate," the aorist imperative active). It literally means to make disciples—who can then make disciples, and to extend this to all nations.

Disciple-making is different than discipleship. Jesus did not command us to do discipleship, He commanded us to make disciples. There is a major difference.

I'd like to totally do away with the word "discipleship." I believe it is so often distorts our true mission. Discipleship, historically, is the grounding of new believers in their faith. Disciple-making involves discipleship, but it is more. Disciple-making involves going, baptizing and teaching to obey. In other words, it demands the winning of the lost, the building of the believer and the equipping of the worker, resulting in the multiplication of leaders to all people groups. I call this "full-orbed disciple-making."

Disciple-making is not just investing in the committed few. It is more than just equipping. It is the full-orbed process of going, baptizing and teaching to obey.

Disciple-making is not just evangelism. Evangelism is going—the winning of the lost to faith in Christ. While important, evangelism is just the first step of disciple-making.

Disciple-making is the whole process of developing fully-trained, reproducing disciples. It recognizes that people are at different stages of growth and development and ministers to them at their present stage—always challenging them but giving them grace to grow at their own pace.

Seekers have different questions and need different activities than believers. Believers have different needs than seekers, and workers deal with very different needs as well. Jesus recognized these natural levels of growth and maturity and designed His ministry appropriately. Disciple-making involves meeting the needs of people at various stages of growth and development.

While we may debate many of Jesus' methods, we never need to debate our mission. He clearly gave it to us after modeling it for us first. I firmly believe the key to understanding how to fulfill the Great Commission is found in a biblical understanding of the life of Christ. His life modeled how to do the Great Commission. That is why, without a good Christology, you will never have a good ecclesiology. Jesus is still the head of the Church, and we are still His body. He has told us to do what He did. His life was about creating a movement of multiplying disciples and we are commanded to fulfill that same mission.

For further discussion:

- Why is discipleship not disciple-making? How do the two differ?
- What is so hard about disciple-making?
- Why is understanding the life of Christ essential to understanding the Great Commission?
- What are we missing in our understanding of disciple-making?
- What happens when we only see a part of disciple-making as our mission?
- When is it okay to make just a part of the Great Commission our mission? When is it not okay?
- Others:

3. LOVE IS OUR MOTIVE (THE GREAT COMMANDMENT)

Imagine the scene. It's near the end of Jesus' ministry. The Pharisees just tried to trap Jesus, but He escaped their grasp (Matt. 22:15). The Sadducees also questioned Jesus, who silenced them with His response: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matt. 22:29).

Next the Pharisees found an expert of the law to test Jesus. The expert's question surely provoked the curiosity of the crowd and probably of the disciples. Mark 12:28-31 says, "One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these."

Imagine the amazement of the crowds, and even of perhaps the disciples, when Jesus said, “the most important one is this...there is no commandment greater than these!” In a complex and demanding world, what beautiful simplicity Jesus offers. Love God and love people.

While the Great Commission addresses our mission, the Great Commandment (loving God, loving people) addresses our motive. If we get our mission right, but don't have the right motive, we will only be like clanging symbols.

Thinking through these things reminds me of a guy I once knew. I will never forget Tom. Even though I haven't talked with Tom for over six years, I will never forget him.

Tom weighed about 300 pounds. He was a youth pastor in Michigan. In terms of youth ministry, he did almost everything wrong. He greased his hair straight back (that was before it came back in style). He always wore white baggy shirts, baggy pants, and white socks.

He'd been through all of our training, but did very little of it—except for the priority of “loving God and loving people.” Because of his deep love for God, Tom had a deep love for people. He never had more than thirty students in his youth ministry, yet they were students from all walks of life.

Early in his ministry, when he went through our advanced training, Tom set a faith goal of reproducing himself sixty-fold. He said he was a thirty-fold kind of guy—definitely not a 100-fold—so he asked God for the ability to reproduce himself sixty-fold (Matt. 13:8). So over twenty years ago, he set a faith goal of seeing sixty youth pastors developed out of his ministry. The last I talked to Tom over forty-eight students had gone into ministry.

Tom's success is not because of his administrative skills, his good looks or his great teaching ability. Tom's success is because he loves God and loves people. Everyone says the number one thing about Tom is the fact that you know he loves you. That love is both relational and life-transforming. That love is tough and tender. That love is Tom's primary ministry skill—it transforms those that place themselves under it.

Without love, we are like clanging symbols. Love never fails. Love never gives up. Love is patient and kind. Jesus showed us how to love and then commanded us, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). For this is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, He said (John 13:35).

Unfortunately, or fortunately (based upon your perspective), in the crisis of our post-modern dilemma, love is the only answer left. Moderns have given the answers in terms of doctrines and theories, but these have come across as stiff and unrealistic. And postmoderns, with their hermeneutic of suspicion, have rejected these answers as formulaic. Mastering the deconstruction of anything that looks like a man-made formula, yet unable to move beyond deconstruction due to the lack of an epistemological framework and a hermeneutic of suspicion that is essentially nihilistic at its core, the answer for breaking through and constructing the post-postmodern world lies—more so than ever—in the love of God embodied in people truly loving one another. It is an epistemology revisited by the reality of love.

In my experience, this is a truth we will never fully master, nor will we ever fully miss it. Yet this is a principle we must keep at the forefront. Always training it, always teaching it, always living it, always growing in our capacity to bear this type of fruit. For the primary fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22). By

the very nature of love, this principle demands that ministry remains relational, not programmatic- or curriculum-driven. All life change happens through loving relationships.

I have not told you anything new. You know this. My prayer in writing this is that it will be a reminder to you of the importance of this truth (2 Pet. 1:12).

For further discussion:

- What would it take for GYI to become known for its loving relationships?
- Why is love the critical component to reconstruct a post-postmodern world?
- As a movement grows, how does the expression of a leader's love change?
- Who is really doing this well?
- What would tough love look like in GYI?
- Could the great commandment be labeled our mission or must it be our motive?
- Others:

4. THE ORGANIC PROCESS IS OUR METHOD

After years of studying the life of Christ, it is my conviction that *the genius of Christ's ministry model is that He lived out His ministry in sync with organic processes He established as the creator of the universe*. Jesus knew that there was a natural way to reap a harvest and that there were processes that could not be avoided in bearing lasting fruit.

On a *ministry* level, He laid a foundation by cultivating the soil of relationships (Phase 1 in our training). He then invested in a few by planting deep seeds of truth (Phase 2) and finally reaped the harvest by mobilizing for outreach (Phase 3). After a period of prayer, He then appointed growing multipliers so that He could spend more time with them (Phase 4). After training, they were released to repeat the process throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8). These disciples in turn developed other proven multipliers who could repeat the process in new fields of ministry (Acts 6). The movement Jesus created followed a very natural process of organic multiplication which, in four and a half years, "filled Jerusalem" (Acts 5:28), and within twenty-some years it was said that "the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world" (Col. 1:6).

On a *personal* outreach level, Jesus also acknowledged a God-given process of coming to faith. By working a process of cultivating, planting and then reaping (cultivating friendships with the lost, planting the seeds of truth in their lives and then calling for repentance and reaping the harvest), Jesus modeled a process of winning of the lost (Luke 15:1-2, John 4:34-38, Isa. 28:23-29).

When followers came to faith, the Scriptures speak of being "rooted and built up" in Christ just as we came to Him (Col. 2:6-7). It is an organic process. In time, Jesus involved His followers in a series of at least five ministry experiences over a two-year period, giving them ample opportunity to be equipped in ministry (John 4, Mark 1, Matt. 10, Luke 9, Luke 10), causing a movement of multiplying disciples. Commissioning a few proven multipliers to oversee the process, Jesus left His disciples with another Counselor who would keep guiding them through the process (John 14:26). The natural development of His disciples was nurtured to multiplication health, not violating the natural processes involved.

Jesus understood and worked this natural process. He did not force-feed the development of His disciples, nor did He try to short-circuit the processes. His fruit was real and natural. He understood the seasons of

growth and worked the processes appropriately. He commanded His disciples to do the same and told them that if they abided in the vine (like He did) they too would increasingly bear “fruit,” “more fruit” and even “much fruit” (John 15). Again, this was a picture of natural and organic processes.

The process involved addressing viruses, nurturing the soil, creating a healthy environment and being patient with the process. But it was an ongoing one that could not be violated. God the Father was free to speed up the process through the miraculous, but He never violated its naturalness. The fruit was not plastic; it was real. It yielded a true harvest of righteousness.

Perhaps one of the most significant impacts of the ministries represented in GYI is the clarity of teaching on the natural processes that Jesus employed in building that multiplying ministry. As a trainer of the life of Christ, I’ve probably heard a thousand times, “You didn’t tell me something I didn’t already know, but you showed a process of growing a multiplying ministry.”

Following Jesus means we must follow the priorities and processes He established for us.

In a postmodern world that is suspicious of any processes or forced mechanical inventions, we must go beyond the mechanisms of the modern world and get back to the organic models Jesus created. It is my conviction that following Jesus means that we work with Him in the natural processes that He ordained, created and abided by. Fruit bearing takes time and there are processes that must be followed.

For further discussion:

- What are some examples of violating natural processes as we enter into new countries?
- What are some of the dangers of understanding the processes Christ abided by? How has our modern world failed here?
- What hinders organic processes from happening?
- Where have we gotten this right in GYI? Where have we failed?
- Others:

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR MEANS

When I first became a Christian, I was extensively taught about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life. Participating actively in Campus Crusade, I studied, taught and personally experienced the transferable concepts labeled “How to be Filled with the Spirit,” “How to Walk in the Spirit,” and “How to Witness in the Spirit.” My second year at Moody Bible Institute, after studying the Spirit-filled life and teaching it extensively, I personally experienced an anointing of the Holy Spirit that I could only define as supernatural in origin and impact. My life was transformed.

When I was involved in youth ministry in two different situations, I watched the Holy Spirit bring a brokenness and repentance that transformed both ministries—usually beginning with my own confession of sin. It was supernatural and outside of my ability to control, manufacture and/or create. It was the Spirit’s working.

As a result, when I began Sonlife, I assumed that everyone understood the importance and critical role the Holy Spirit played in a believer’s life. I now believe that was a mistake.

In a recent study I conducted on the Holy Spirit as my Counselor in John 14, I was impacted by the fresh

reality of this truth.

Jesus had just told His disciples that He was going to leave them (John 13:36). They would have to go through many troubles but were not to let their hearts be troubled (John 14:1). They were to follow His example—doing what He did—doing even greater things than He did (John 14:12). To all of this, Jesus stated that it was good that He was going away (John 16:7), because then He would be given a gift that He would pour out on them—the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).

In describing this “gift” in John 14:16, Jesus used a very unique and interesting word. He told them that He would send them “another Counselor” (NIV, ’84 edition). Jesus was already called the Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6). But the word “another” was the unique Greek word “allos,” rather than the common word “heteros.” It literally meant “another of the exact same kind.” In other words, the Holy Spirit would be to the disciples (and to all future disciples), exactly what Jesus had been to them. The word for counselor was the word “parakaleo,” literally meaning “comforter, protector, defender, helper and counselor.” Jesus had been all of these to His disciples and now the Holy Spirit would be another of the exact same kind.

Throughout the Bible, the disciples were called “followers,” “co-workers,” “servants” and “friends.” So Jesus said He would send them another friend—the Holy Spirit.

I have had to ask myself if the Holy Spirit is my best friend. Over 40 times in Acts you see this friendship with the Holy Spirit pictured. Look at some of the following verses:

Acts 1:2 The Holy Spirit gave instructions
Acts 1:8 The Holy Spirit came upon them
Acts 1:16 The Holy Spirit spoke
Acts 2:4 The Holy Spirit enabled
Acts 9:31 The Holy Spirit strengthened and encouraged
Acts 11:28 The Holy Spirit predicted
Acts 13:4 The Holy Spirit sent them on their way
Acts 13:52 The Holy Spirit filled them with joy
Acts 16:6-7 The Holy Spirit closed doors
Acts 16:9 The Holy Spirit opened doors
Acts 20:23 The Holy Spirit warned them

And then, my favorite verse in Acts, which so clearly portrays this intimate friendship with the Holy Spirit:

Acts 15:28 “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”

The Holy Spirit is our God-given means of walking and living as Jesus walked and lived (1 John 2:6) and doing what Jesus did (John 14:12). This shouldn’t surprise us because Jesus in His humanity leaned upon this same resource of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus:

- was conceived/born (Luke 1:35)
- was anointed (Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38)
- was filled (Luke 4:1, 14)
- was sealed (John 6:27)
- was led (Luke 4:1)

- was full of joy (Luke 10:21)
- performed miracles (Matt. 12:28, Luke 4:14-15, 18)
- was raised from the dead (Rom. 8:11)

A Spirit-filled life is not an additional luxury to the Christ-follower. It is an essential element of life and ministry. Without the Holy Spirit, we are doomed to failure.

For further discussion:

- Is the Holy Spirit your friend?
- What would need to change for that to become a reality?
- Why is it significant that Jesus said He'd send another Counselor of the exact same kind?
- What does a renewed emphasis upon the Holy Spirit look like?
- In what ways is your ministry emphasizing the Holy Spirit?
- Others:

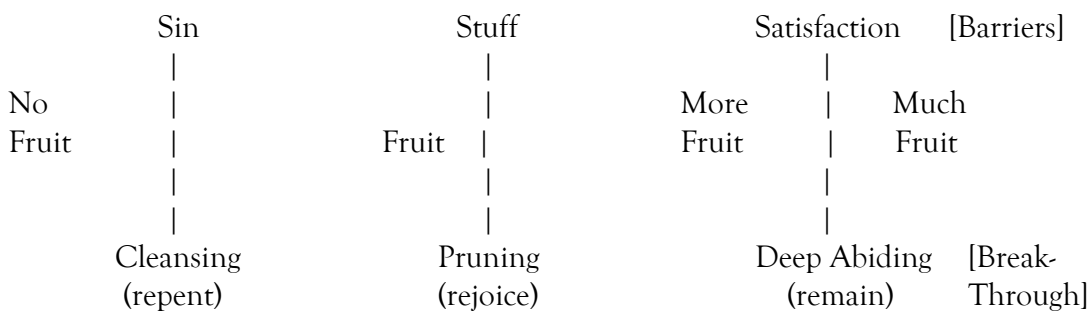
6. FRUIT IS OUR MEASURE

Over 55 times in the Scriptures the term fruit is used. Fruit is always a picture of multiplication and is linked to God's blessing. In Genesis 1:28, we are told that "God blessed them" and then said, "Be fruitful and increase in number." God's blessing was connected to fruitfulness, and fruitfulness was linked to multiplication.

In John 13, Jesus knew that His time had come. He washed His disciples' feet, predicted His betrayal and then told His disciples that He will be leaving them. In John 14, Jesus has a question-and-answer time with Thomas, Philip and Judas. In John 14:31, Jesus said, "Come now; let us leave." In their commentary, Wescott and Hort believe that the rest of Jesus' discourse is conducted on His walk from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. As Jesus passes through a vineyard, He begins to talk to His disciples about His agenda for their lives. He begins to powerfully describe what He is going to bring about in their lives and His desires to see them "bear much fruit, showing [themselves] to be my disciples" (John 15:8). Jesus understood the process He graphically describes to His disciples.

In chapter 15, it is a four-step process: no fruit (v. 2), fruit (v. 2, 4), more fruit (v. 2) and then much fruit (v. 5, 8). Each step of the process had barriers, breakthrough points and a proper response. Let me quickly share my understanding of this vivid lesson Jesus shared with His disciples on the road to the cross.

Graphed, it would look like this:



The first barrier was sin, which will yield no fruit. We see this in Verse 1 when Jesus speaks of the vine "in" the branch that yields no fruit. A vine that has fallen off of the fence goes down in the mud; needs to be

washed off, lifted back up into the sunlight, before it can bear fruit. The barrier is dirty sin, the breakthrough is cleansing and the response is repentance.

The second barrier is stuff. As a vine grows, often ten to twelve branches will spring out of the vine. Without careful pruning by the gardener, all the sap from the vine will be consumed by the increasingly tangled web of branches. A good gardener carefully studies each individual plant, carefully prunes it back to two to three branches, allowing the sap to flow abundantly to these fewer branches and produce abundant, rich grapes. But without the pruning, the vine will eventually end up with a tangled web of multiple branches, little fruit and, eventually, the death of the plant. The barrier is stuff, the breakthrough is pruning and the response is rejoicing (Jam. 1:2).

The third barrier is satisfaction. Being busy with the “more fruit” we can become content with the increased harvest. Five times in this passage, Jesus speaks of abiding. It is only through deep abiding that we are brought into that place of learning that needs to be found for “much fruit” to happen. The barrier is satisfaction, the breakthrough is deep abiding and the response is remaining.

But however you understand this passage (perhaps disagreeing with my description of it), it is clear that Jesus stated directly and powerfully that His agenda in their lives was to get them to the “much fruit” category. He stated, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8). There was no question in the disciples’ mind what Jesus’ desires were. They understood the vineyard. They understood the role of the branches, the gardener and the desired fruit. Jesus made it clear this was His agenda for their lives.

This was not something new for the disciples. They had watched Jesus speak to thousands, train seventy, recruit twelve, graduate eleven and pour His life into three. They were slowly coming to understand that Jesus’ mission was not to reach the world as much as it was to make disciples capable of reaching the world. Soon they would be launched out into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world. Within two years they would fill Jerusalem with His teaching (Acts 5:28), within four and a half years they would have multiplying churches (Acts 9:31), within nineteen years they would turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Multiplication was God’s DNA. Fruit was God’s description of that multiplication.

The implications of this for GYI are numerous. First, we can say with confidence that God’s agenda in each of our lives is to mature us to the “much fruit” category. This will involve various seasons of life—both good and difficult—but He desires that we bear much fruit and prove to be His disciples (John 15:8).

Secondly, we must, without apology, be fruit inspectors. When we appoint and select leaders to oversee ministries, we must ask the tough questions of fruit bearing, questions such as:

- Is fruit evident in this leader’s life?
- Is it coming forth?
- Is it growing? If not, why?
- Are we just about the talk or are we also about the walk?
- If God’s agenda is fruit, is it ours?

As we ask these questions, we must keep in mind that in the Scriptures, fruit is described as character (Gal. 5:22-23), conduct (Rom. 6:21-22, Phil. 1:11) and converts (Rom. 1:13).

Thirdly, it is God's desire to see a movement of multiplication out of the impact of our lives and ministry. Our dream in GYL is to see 100 countries by 2020 with movements of multiplication among the youth of that country. This is not a pipe dream—it is God's passion.

For further discussion:

- What are some difficulties in being a fruit inspector?
- What are some dangers in not being a fruit inspector?
- Why is understanding the seasons of fruit-bearing important (fruit, more fruit, much fruit, etc.)?
- How do we usually mess up the fruit inspection?
- How do we accurately measure the phase of the movement in our country?
- Others:

7. THE GOSPEL REMAINS OUR MESSAGE

Critical to the development of the next generation of leaders capable of becoming fishers of men (Matt. 4:19) is the clear biblical model in Jesus' life of helping His disciples learn to boldly proclaim the message of the Gospel.

Assuming that the clarity of the Gospel remains intact (Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again (1 Cor. 15:3-4, Gal. 1:8-9)), the challenge that we face, and every generation faces, is the courage and boldness needed to keep proclaiming that Gospel. All the pressures of the world, the flesh and the devil are mobilized to hinder that proclamation.

I believe three challenges must be met in every generation to keep the Gospel central.

First and foremost is the theological challenge. Is the Gospel message clearly being presented? Does the next generation understand the content and the depth of the Gospel message or has it been lost in the multiplicity of messages sent their way? Have we watered down the Gospel to be about just belief versus repentance? Are we giving that next generation intentional and multiple opportunities to be equipped in presenting that Gospel (Phile. 1:6)?

This leads to the second challenge. It is a leadership challenge that Paul speaks about in Romans 10. Paul presents a six-step process: being sent, proclaiming, hearing, believing, calling out and being saved. Two of these steps directly rest in our hands—sending and proclaiming. Simply put, without sending and without proclamation, the other steps cannot happen. Jesus clearly modeled this intentional development of the disciples in this proclamation process. On at least five different occasions, approximately every six months, you see Jesus taking His disciples on a ministry experience where the good news was proclaimed (John 4 through Samaria, Mark 1:39 throughout Galilee in the synagogues, Luke 8:1-3 throughout the cities and towns, Matthew 10 where the twelve are sent out two by two, Luke 10 where 72 are sent out). The last two events have Jesus very clearly sending His disciples and only in the last event does Jesus not participate. At the end of this process Jesus was “full of joy through the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10:21). He had strategically and intentionally developed His disciples to become fishers of men. His passion and focus was very intentional. His energy was very focused. His life modeled the clear priority of developing disciples capable of proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

The third challenge is personal. Are we as leaders actively engaged in proclamation and leading our ministry in this bold and risky challenge? It is no accident that Paul often and repeatedly asked for prayers in being

able to boldly proclaim the Gospel (Eph. 6:19-20, Col. 4:4).

Failure to ever get to proclamation, in time has the effect of losing the clarity of the Gospel message. A generation that never proclaims the Gospel is the generation that loses the significance of that Gospel. As we are active in sharing our faith, we come to a “deepening [of our] understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ” (Phile. 1:6). In today’s culture of political correctness, personal truth, tolerance of one another’s viewpoints and constant emphasis upon belonging versus believing, sanctification versus justification, following versus repenting, I see a generation moving away from the simplicity and power of boldly proclaiming the Gospel message (Rom. 1:16).

The Greek word ‘euaggelizo’ (evangelism), literally means the proclamation (declaring verbally) of the good news. While *outreach* is a process of cultivating and planting, *evangelism* is an event meaning to proclaim. Biblical evangelism hasn’t occurred until proclamation happens.

In GYL, we have always held to the training value of asking tough questions about the end result of the evangelism and discipleship process. The end result of evangelism is measured by asking the tough question: Is the gospel being proclaimed clearly and concisely and to what extent? The end result of the discipleship process has always been measured by asking: Is peer-to-peer reproduction happening and are we developing fully-trained fishers of men? Both of these questions are rooted in the concept of proclaiming the Gospel message and calling others to do what Jesus did. Central to this whole process is the clarity and courage needed to boldly proclaim the Gospel message which is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

The Gospel must remain our message, and, as we seek to develop that next generation, the proclamation of the Gospel must remain at the core of GYL. Every generation must swim upstream in resistance to proclamation. GYL members need to be the warriors and champions that keep leading the new generation to become fishers of men, not just keepers of the aquarium.

For further discussion:

- Why is proclamation so difficult?
- Why is proclamation so necessary?
- Is proclamation ever easy?
- What happens to a generation that sees evangelism as just acts of service, cultivating or planting?
- What are some of the additional pressures in this culture against proclamation?
- Others:

8. THE CHURCH IS THE MOVEMENT

It is true that the church is God’s chosen vehicle for fulfilling the Great Commission. It is true that Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt. 16:18). It is also true that the local church is the visible expression of God’s universal Church and it is the Bride of Christ. Jesus remains the Head of His Body—the church. The church is God’s movement (Eph. 3:10-11). We don’t need to create a movement; we need to fuel God’s existing movement of healthy local churches.

We know that the mission of the church is disciple-making. We also know the nature of the church is defined as a “family, a priesthood, a community, a body.” These are all terms to describe the church’s nature, with family being the number one term. However, we must not confuse the nature of the church

with the mission of the church. Many have wrongly defined the mission of the church as that of being a family or a community. However, that is not our mission—it is our nature. By functioning according to our nature, we will successfully accomplish our mission. We must not confuse the two.

However, the question often unanswered is simply this: what is the church? Every resource I have which seeks to define the church always talks in terms of its mission or nature, not its definition. When is a local gathering of believers a church?

Some would argue a gathering of believers is a church when it reaches a certain size (most denominations call a local gathering a “mission station” until it can sustain itself at which point it becomes a church plant at 50 or 75 or 100 people).

Some would argue a local gathering of believers is a church when it has appointed leaders. Yet Paul said in Titus 1:5 to go back and do that which is unfinished and “appoint elders in every town.” You can be a church without having elders appointed. It may take time to grow biblical leadership.

So when is a local gathering of believers a local church? What is the definition of a biblical church? If we are to fuel a movement of multiplication, it is imperative that we can define the local church.

For simplicity, let me present my definition of a local church and then wrestle with some of the problems. I simply define the local church as two to three people gathered in His name for the express purpose of glorifying Him and fulfilling the Great Commission. This definition contains two elements. First is the size factor. Size, I’d like to suggest, is not the factor. A local church can be just two people who are gathered in His name. The Lord’s presence is what makes it a church. Secondly, it is purposeful, not just two Christians meeting for Bible study. Its purpose is the furtherance of the Great Commission.

With this definition, we then need to notice that the Great Commission is not to go and plant churches! The Great Commission is to make disciples and then cluster them together into local churches, repeating the process locally. Our role in GYI is to fuel this movement of healthy churches, which are to make disciples who can make disciples. We are not about working around the church or even being parachurch. Our model is that of being pro-church and within the church. We are about movement building and that movement is about healthy gatherings of believers living and walking as Jesus walked.

For further discussion:

- What is wrong with this definition of the church?
- What are some of the problems of being church-centric?
- Why is the great commission not “go and plant churches”?
- What is the result of losing the focus of making disciples vs. making churches?
- Is a church a church if it is not about disciple-making?
- Others:

9. YOUTH ARE OUR MANDATE

George Sweeting, former president of Moody Bible Institute, used to always say the main job of leadership is to keep “the main thing the main thing.”

James Stewart, in his classic book, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, starts the book by saying,

“Christianity began as a young people’s movement. In thinking of Jesus and his disciples, that is the first fact to make quite clear. Unfortunately, it is a fact which Christian art and Christian preaching have too often obscured. But it is quite certain that the original disciple band was a young men’s group. Most of the apostles were probably still in their twenties when they went out after Jesus. In this connection notice how the apostle Paul, writing almost a generation later, reports that of the five hundred to whom the risen Christ appeared, ‘the greater part remain unto this present’ (1 Cor. 15:6); the natural inference is that the spiritual conquests of Jesus had been mainly among the younger people” (55).

He then goes on to argue that we’d be foolish if we did not, at every stage of our lives, devote all of our time, talent and treasures to mobilize the next generation for the cause of Christ.

We believe this in GYL. We know the truth of these statements. We know that the most strategic way to birth a long-term movement of multiplication is through mobilizing that next generation of young leaders. By doing so, like Jesus did, we ensure the long-term ongoing success of the movement.

Why is this so true? Why is so strategic to focus on that “13-30 window” of potential young leaders? Let me suggest some reasons:

1. Youth are the most moldable. They have little to unlearn and, if developed early with the right DNA, they can become life-long reproducers.
2. They are looking for a cause. In our postmodern world, it is still the great cause of the God’s metanarrative that will rally the next generation, despite what the skeptics may say. Looking for a cause to which to give their lives, they can be challenged at a strategic time to refocus their lives’ callings and directions.
3. They have universal tendencies. In our MTV culture, they easily communicate across borders and nationalities and truly have become the first global youth culture.
4. The Scripture mandates the reaching of that next generation. Not only did Jesus focus on younger leaders, Psalms 78:3-7 tells us to do the same.
5. They are the most responsive to the gospel. Over 85% of all of those who come to faith do so before their 20th birthday.
6. The world is full of them. By 2020, over 50% of the globe will be under the age of 25. Over 60% of many nations are now under 20. They are a massive people group to be reached and mobilized.
7. Jesus modeled this. Jesus invested in the young leader. He knew that the most strategic way long-term was through raising up that next generation of leaders who could leave a legacy of ministry impact.

For further discussion:

- Are youth our focus or are young leaders our focus?
- What would the difference be?
- What happens as we all grow older (or already have)?
- How do we keep youth our focus?
- What are some of the weaknesses of this approach?
- To focus on youth, does this mean in time we have to focus on adults, parents or the church as a whole?
- Others:

10. RELATIONSHIPS ARE OUR MOMENTUM

As we look at the disciple-making movement that Jesus modeled, we see that it was developed on the backbone of deep, meaningful relationships between Jesus and His disciples. Jesus spent intentional time with His disciples. As He spent time with them, He imparted His character and priorities to them. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus and His disciples “doing life together.” They lived together, ate together, ministered together—Jesus used every opportunity to build meaningful relationships with His disciples and to teach them about what it means to be a Christ-follower.

In the book of Acts, we see how this pattern of building relationships continued. One of the pillars of the early church was the depth of relationship among believers—people who were prepared to sacrifice for one another, people who together were devoted to the apostles’ teaching, people who together were committed to the cause. Throughout the book of Acts, it can be seen that the impetus and continuity of the movement was derived from relationships with one another.

In John 17:11, Jesus prays for the believers and He asks “that they may be one as [He and the Father] are one.” It is important to recognize that “being one” does not mean being identical, but that it means being united in common purpose. Believers can “be one” in purpose, while recognizing uniqueness and celebrating the diversity found within the body of Christ. This allows people to minister using their different talents, gifts and abilities, while achieving a common purpose.

As a movement, we believe in developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with the people we minister to and with. We believe that relationships are to be held above partnerships.

For the disciple-making movement to continue, we need to recognize that the movement will derive its impetus, strength or continuity from meaningful relationships. We need to be intentional about developing these with the people we are called to minister to.

For further discussion:

- In what ways can relationships be strengthened throughout your movement?
- What is the greatest hindrance to deepening relationships?
- What happens when relationships begin to break down?
- How can you measure and monitor ongoing relational health?
- What are signs of good relational health?
- Others:

11. LEADING SERVANTS IS OUR MOTTO

Leading Servants is the motto of a healthy movement. You will note that this is different to the familiar term: servant leadership. Sometimes the term “servant leadership” can be misunderstood and there is an unspoken thought that if someone leads, they are not serving. Sometimes there is also the unspoken sense that servant leadership implies that people who are servant leaders are to be “meek and mild” and their leadership gift is hampered in a way.

By Leading Servants, we mean that we desire to see people using their God-given gift to lead. We desire to see people who lead, but who do this as Jesus did—humbly and with an attitude of “whoever is great must become least.”

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus very clearly teaches His disciples that they are to be humble servants as they

lead and minister to people. Jesus knew that the idea of leader as “loving servant of all” would not appeal to most people. Securing our own creature comforts is a much more common mission. But “servant” is His requirement for those who want to lead in His Kingdom.

The sharp contrast between our common ideas about leadership and the revolution Jesus announced is nowhere clearer than in Mark 10:42-44: “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

This was such a revolutionary idea that even those closest to Jesus, the disciples James and John, used their ambitious mother in a scheme to secure top positions in the coming kingdom before the other ten received their due. These two disciples took very seriously Jesus’ promise about sitting on glorious thrones and judging the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28), but they misunderstood how to get there. Despite their friendship, Jesus did not give an inch to their campaign for office. “You don’t know what you are asking,” was His reply (Matt. 20:22). James and John wanted the glory, but not the shame; the crown, but not the cross; the role of the master, but not servant.

Jesus’ teaching on servanthood and suffering was not intended merely to inspire good behavior. Jesus wanted to impart the spirit of servanthood, the sense of personal commitment and identity that He expressed when He said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Mere acts of service could be performed with motives far from spiritual.

For further discussion:

- Describe the qualities of a movement led by leading servants?
- What happens when a movement expands beyond its base of leading servants?
- What are the non-negotiables of developing leading servants?
- How does servant leaders differ from leading servants?
- Others:

12. KINGDOM OBEDIENCE IS OUR DISTINCTIVE MARK

As we look at the meaning of the word “kingdom,” we find that it denotes sovereignty, royal power and dominion, as well as the territory or people over whom a king rules. The Kingdom of God is the sphere of God’s rule, and He has not relinquished His sovereignty in the face of rebellion, but has declared His purpose to establish it. God calls all people to this Kingdom. He calls on all people everywhere, without distinction of race or nationality, to enter into this Kingdom and to submit voluntarily to His rule.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, the Kingdom of Heaven, or Kingdom of God, is the central theme of Jesus’ preaching. John the Baptist first introduces the theme, and Jesus takes this message over from him. Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom follows John’s word for word, yet it bears a much more comprehensive character.

As we look at the Synoptic Gospels, we see that the Kingdom of God has two sides, much like a single coin has two sides to it. The one aspect/side speaks about the “here and now” (the present). This aspect of the Kingdom of God often highlights the suffering that is involved in the “here and now” for those who enter into the Kingdom. The second side/aspect speaks about the coming Kingdom and the reward that is associated with it, the reward which exists for those who have been obedient to the Kingdom in the “here and now.”

Jesus teaches His followers many things about the Kingdom. One of the things that we learn from His teaching is that entrance into the Kingdom is by new birth only (Matt. 18:3, John 3:5). Jesus makes it clear that nothing that a man may be by nature and nothing that a man can attain to can bring him into the Kingdom. It is only by the new birth through Jesus that this is possible.

We also learn from Jesus' teachings that a new nature is received through new birth. This new nature evidences itself through obedience. Obedience is God's love language. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

The heart of the Kingdom of God is revealed in Romans 14:17-18, which says, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ is this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval."

Ultimately, those who will reign in this Kingdom are those who seek above all things to be obedient to Kingdom principles: those who lay aside personal desires and needs in order to usher in the new Kingdom. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." In Luke 18:29-30, Jesus says, "Truly I tell you...no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."

Finally, from the above paragraph, we can deduce that those who belong to the Kingdom are those in whose lives the Kingdom takes visible form, the light of the world, the salt of the earth, those who have taken on themselves the yoke of the Kingdom, who live by their King's commandments and learn from Him. As a movement, we hold at the core a desire to be mastered by obedience to the Kingdom, in order to show others His love, to ultimately bring glory to His name through the ushering in of the coming Kingdom!

For further discussion:

- Why was the Good News of the Kingdom so good?
- What did the preaching of this message by Jesus and John create?
- In what ways do we need to be proclaiming this Kingdom message?
- What does Kingdom preaching produce? What does the lack of it produce?
- Others:

***The last three sections of this paper were adapted from the written DNA of J-Life in Africa after they rewrote this paper and adapted it for their use.