

# Sowing the Seeds for an Indigenous Movement of Church-based Youth Ministry

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*"Listen!" Jesus said, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." - Mark 4:3-8.*

This paper seeks to address issues related to the genesis of a healthy indigenous movement. It's about beginnings. In approaching the topic I will work from the framework laid out in a previous GYI paper by Dave Patty entitled, *A Strategy for Global Youth Ministry*, in which he gives a four phase strategy of developing a movement in a country. The phases are Foundation, Deepening, Multiplication and Departure and in broad terms relate to the strategy seen in the development of Christ's movement. This paper will focus on the first of those phases, Foundation, exploring and expanding on the essential foundational factors of a healthy indigenous movement of church-based youth ministry.

As the book of Genesis is foundational to the Bible and Christian worldview, so the beginnings of a movement are critical to its future health and capacity to multiply (which in itself is essential by definition to a movement). Sowing the seeds for an indigenous movement suggests a different metaphor than laying a 'foundation', and one, I suggest, which is more helpful to our purposes. The metaphor of agriculture seems more appropriate than the one from the world of construction. Sowing seeds with the hope of reaping a harvest that can in turn be multiplied into more expansive 'sowing is a humble process dependent upon much over which the person has little or no control. It reminds one of the ultimate dependence on God and the need to understand the indigenous setting. Construction on the other hand can be carried out with little reference to indigenous setting using human energy and resources to build something from prefabricated parts and a predetermined plan that duplicates a form (that may or may not still be functional) from a foreign setting. Indeed, much of church architecture stands testimony to construction projects by outsiders, with outsiders' resources and designs that would never have arisen from the indigenous context.

## **From Construction to Farming**

At the outset we need to think more as farmers rather than construction engineers for growing a movement is an organic rather than a mechanistic process. The work of Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development*, explores this metaphor in depth as it relates to church growth. It reminds us of the fact that growth is what God produces when the conditions are right and limiting environmental factors are minimised. The farmer works to optimize those factors within the environment over which she has some influence/control with total dependence on God for those major factors over which she has little or no control.

What 'crop' are we looking to God to raise up? What is it we want to see in the future? *Spiritually powerful indigenous movements of God among young people, church-based ministries that are mobilizing youth to reach youth, resulting in self-propagating and multiplying ministries reaching every young person with the gospel, so helping to fulfil the Great Commission.* This is what we seek

to harvest. Therefore the seed sown must be of like kind, the same species, or we will reap a different outcome. It's simple agriculture: we can only reap what we sow.

Furthermore, the nature of the seed is primarily what determines the method and manner of sowing, the preferred soil, best timing, and most conducive environment. The farmer needs to be a student of the seed as well as the indigenous context. To plant the wrong seed he will never produce the harvest he hopes for. But getting the right seed is not the only issue to contend with. To plant the right seed but at the wrong time or in the wrong manner will limit if not cause failure in the harvest. To plant the right seed in the right way and at the right time but fail to nurture it correctly will also limit fruitfulness. To do all else right but harvest prematurely or too late will also mitigate against maximum result. What is the right seed? What is the right (most effective) method of planting and how do we judge that? What is the right time/season and how is that determined? How do we nurture the growth of the crop? When is it ready for harvest and what are the indicators of readiness? As with agriculture, experience is the best guide, the best teacher, and we need to be documenting a shared body of knowledge of how best to sow seeds and grow movements. GYI can help in that regard. These and other questions will be explored as the paper progresses.

### **Preparation Phase: Where do we start?**

Before even sowing the seed, the farmer does considerable preparation. I suggest that there needs to be a phase added to the four proposed by Dave Patty and that a Preparation phase needs to be the beginning point. The Preparation phase is the time of doing the home work, mapping out the plan, and gathering supplies before committing to or beginning the Foundational actions of planting. \

Some elements in the Preparation phase may include:

**1. Prayer.** This is more than the right 'spiritual' thing to say, but an essential beginning point. Before doing anything else Jesus spent focused time in fasting and prayer. Before launching in any new area much focused and concentrated prayer must be undertaken seeking God's direction as to what if any further action should be taken. Jesus Himself gave prayer as the starting point of responding to the urgency of the harvest when he said "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. *Pray therefore* to the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into His harvest field." (Matt.9:37,38) We need to be actively seeking God to raise up and send out 'workers'. Furthermore, one indicator of the places God would lead us to become involved in may be those places He first gives us a burden to pray for.

*What ways can we more effectively mobilize and focus a growing movement of prayer for the fulfillment of the GYI vision?*

**2. Research.** Before getting involved in any new setting we need to thoroughly do our home work in order to have a sounder basis for wise decision making. What is already happening in youth ministry? Who is doing something effective? Who has God already raised up with a heart, vision and values closest to GYI's? Do any other GYI 'farmers' have connections/activity past or present? What is the state of the churches? What are signs of health/sickness? What is the history of the church and mission? What are the basic demographics of the society? What are the greatest needs in the Christian community and the community at large? Too often outsiders enter into a context with no information or at best part-information seeking to apply their solutions. This is arrogant presumption.

Even if we are being invited into the country we still would do well to do our homework. What will be the implications of becoming aligned with this individual or group? Do they demonstrate the values and philosophy of ministry we espouse? Are they of good reputation? Are they Great Commission focused in their activity? Are they recognized as servant leaders in good standing across the Body of Christ? Are they building God's kingdom or their own, are they known for building bridges or walls? There is danger of unwittingly becoming 'merchandised' or manipulated by individuals or groups who would use their exclusive or initial contact with the 'international expert' as a personal credential or 'trump card' to further their own agenda, exert more influence or gain greater credibility and status than their actual ministry would warrant. This can only marginalize, contain or discredit the movement before it even gets started. As David Hesselgrave points out, there is: "the danger (especially in a new work) of not recognizing who the respondents are in the eyes of the other members of their society and then acting accordingly". (*Communicating Christ Cross Culturally*, 2nd edition, Zondervan, 1991, pg 464) We need to go in with our eyes open because *our* identity and credibility in the eyes of the other members of that society will largely be determined by *theirs!*

*What ways can we work together to ensure basic information is researched and shared? What standard questions ought to be researched in any prospective 'field'? What qualifications and criterion need to be considered in determining the suitability of a person or place for beginning and how is that to be done by whom?*

**3. Timing.** It's clear from Jesus and the Apostle Paul's ministry that timing is everything and God's leading knows God's timing. Frequently in the Gospels we see Jesus choices of action determined by right timing (eg. Matthew 4:12,13,17). Paul also demonstrated that his best logically reasoned plans weren't necessarily God's plan or God's time (Romans 1:10, Acts 16:6,10). Opportunity does not constitute in itself God's call or timing.

In Australia, a key contributing factor to the strength of the movement of Youth Ministries is that it was already well established (6 years) and self-sustaining from home grown 'ingredients' birthed by indigenous vision, self confident and secure in its leadership *before* it had exposure to the abundant resources and training of Sonlife or another further advanced and resourced group. Even in the wider world of Campus Crusade international there was no real equivalent so apart from basic training and tools, and movement philosophy, specific processes and resources had to be developed from scratch. This was at times frustratingly slow but, in hindsight, very healthy giving high integrity so that nationals recognized and owned YMA as Australian, home-grown, not another 'American import'.

If there is an indigenous leader developing an emerging model or requesting help, care must be exercised not to short circuit necessary gestation or development or to flood with unnecessary help. Like the well-meaning child who helps the struggling butterfly free of its cocoon only to weaken it for life. Timing is important. Equally so where there is no responsiveness, we do not 'bring on' the season by greater effort, for "...receptivity...is first of all a matter of God's sovereign direction in the affairs of people (Rev.3:7) ...factors that facilitate receptivity can, for the most part, be only indirectly affected by Christians committed to mission."(pg 633).

**4. Soil.** The soil is the setting. Where do we begin? The simple answer is where God is already at work and the soil is prepared and fertile. Or at least where there is reason to believe it has *the* best likelihood *of* becoming productive in the shortest time.

*What are questions of timing that need to be considered in seeding indigenous movements? Who is in the best position to answer the question of right timing, the indigenous leader or the multiplier? What indicators might we look for as to God's time for GYI involvement? What are the dangers of untimely or inappropriate involvement?*

Jesus' parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-12) is pertinent here. The variable was not the seed or the sower but the soil. "Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." (v8) It's not to suggest that thorny soil can't with hard work and persistence over time become good, but rather where is the beginning point and the focus and if the goal is multiplying a movement then that beginning point needs to be good high yield soil. We must multiply the good seed to multiply a movement. All people at all times are of equal value to God, but not all people are at any point of time equally strategic to the development and multiplication of the movement of God. Quite simply, Jesus demonstrated this in his selection and investment in the 12. He was strategic in the soil farmed.

When Jesus started his ministry he didn't do so in Nazareth even though that was his home town, nor in Jerusalem though that was the centre of religious and political influence. Rather he went to Capernaum in Galilee where he saw the Spirit at work and where the people were responsive, prepared good soil. Likewise we need to be open to where God is already raising up people with like mind and vision and responsive hearts. Good soil refers not just to individuals but to areas as a crop requires a farmable tract of land to be viable. For Jesus, Capernaum offered a viable area.

The best beginning point may not be where we expect or even where we prefer (are comfortable). It might be a different denomination or social setting (eg inner city), race or culture than we are comfortable with. This requires flexibility. It also requires commitment to and primary consideration of what will serve the future of the movement rather than past successes, status quo, institutional loyalties or traditional prejudices. Our commitment must be to work the land where we can reap an abundant crop not just enjoy the climate or the view; to producing and containing the new wine not serving the old wineskins.

In the first couple of years of Youth Ministries Australia's development, we recognized we needed to work at developing a modeling ministry that demonstrated our distinctives. It was dear that our own small church was not within years of that possibility but another church from another denomination we were working with had the basic ingredients and the leadership had the vision. So we faced a choice between making a strategic move for the future of the movement or remaining comfortable and cozy. We moved churches and developed a model that went on to reproduce and send out leaders for a decade after we had left. The key was considering the requirements of 'good soil' and where God is already working and how could we join Him in His work. Jesus said, "My Father is always at His work to this very day... the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing..." (an 5:17,19) We looked for where God was already at work and then moved to join Him in it. Henry Blackaby develops this concept in depth in his study guide, Experiencing God.

*What are the essential trace elements needed in 'the soil' to indicate suitability to plant the seed for an indigenous movement of God? What may be some indicators of where God is already at work and where the soil is good? Whose responsibility is it to work the soil (Mk.4:3-8) removing rocks, weeding out thistles cultivating it for future planting and what implications has this on GYI?*

**5. Quality Seed.** A good harvest requires good seed; the best requires the best. The foundation phase of Jesus ministry has more to do with Him searching out, sampling and gathering good resilient indigenous seed than labouring over the poor soil to make it good. In the beginning at least, Jesus focused more on seed than soil. When he had gathered the seed (the initial disciples) he seemed to select the best available patch of soil (Capernaum) and work with it. This would suggest that the 'who' of the seed is more significant than the 'where' of the soil.

The seed is the initial package that contains all the DNA of the fully mature end product. Whatever is deficient in the seed will be deficient in the end product regardless of the quality of the soil. In the context of this paper, the seed is the person, the incarnational multiplier. This person needs to have internalized the distinctives of the mission, vision and values of GYI, the principles of ministry, the strategy of a movement (per Jesus strategy) and be able to separate them from culture-specific forms of expression (particularly their own). They need to be able to work from pure Biblical principle and philosophical framework.

However, this person also needs to be an outstanding youth ministry practitioner with demonstrated skills in doing ministry not just teaching it. It's preferable that this proven competence be in the culture and context of those they seek to mobilize. They need to be better than average, in fact they need to be *exceptional* or they will never build a notable (above average) ministry. Unless they can demonstrate well above average performance they will not attract attention and arouse curiosity so that people ask "What's the secret of that ministry's success?" (usually they ask, "What's your programme?"). As a result they will lack the credibility and platform as a trainer of other leaders. There is danger in evaluating a person's quality as 'seed' based upon how well they talk and teach the strategy when the obvious test of seed is what it grows over time. We must ensure that intended incarnational multipliers are first of all *known* for their effectiveness in winning and discipling young people particularly those outside the existing evangelical community and in developing processes of discipling and leadership multiplication. GYI must safe guard its seed so that only those known by their peers as the best youth workers get to be trainers.

Training of potential multipliers must equip them in the essential ministry skills and develop those skills to a high level of competence so that they are sort after as leaders/pastors who produce the goods. We discredit the strategy of ministry we advocate when we certify someone to represent it who is not already considered an exceptionally effective youth ministry practitioner by their peers. If a potential multiplier does not yet have the proven personal ministry skills and proven model then we should postpone commissioning them as trainers or multipliers until they do. Instead we need to focus on further coaching. This may mean a slower beginning for a stronger finish. One sure indicator as to readiness is that the person is regularly offered a job by people in Christian community 'head hunting' the best. I would tell YMA staff that they should expect job offers and not take it as a surprise or indication of God's leading, because 'the best' will always be sought out. If people aren't offering them jobs then it's because they don't have credibility.

*What competencies in working with youth do we expect a potential multiplier to have demonstrated? What would we look to in a person's personal ministry as indicators of them being not just 'good seed' but the 'best seed'? What checks do we need to build in to ensure that only proven multipliers are 'certified'?*

**6. The Variety or Strain of seed.** Wheat comes in different varieties. When the British colonised Australia (that's a euphemism for dumping unwanted convicts!) they sent out wheat seeds for the first harvest. The strain or class of wheat that flourished so well in mother England failed dismally in

the harsher drier conditions of Australia. Only after developing a new strain of wheat seed in Australia did crops succeed. Now Australia is a major world producer of wheat.

Like wise, the seed of the incarnational multiplier comes in a number of varieties:

1. The resident national (indigenous),
2. The non-resident (willing to return) or recently returned national (diaspora),
3. The resident international expatriate married to and living as a national,
4. The resident international expatriate missionary,
5. The non-resident short-term missionary.

As a general rule, all things being equal, these varieties are listed in order from the least problematic/most effective to the most problematic/least effective. All *can* be effective but the preferred options run from 1-5. Complications and inherent problems can be minimised by patiently seeking to raise up or seek out variety 1 -3. Regardless of start-up 'seed' the goal of all is to move to reproducing variety 1. resident indigenous multipliers. This should not take more than one generation!

*What initiatives can be taken to recruit internationals living outside of their country of birth or cultural heritage (eg. students) to return as youth ministry missionaries to help fulfill the vision of GYI? How can we more effectively connect migrant churches in our countries with youth ministry needs in their countries of origin? What models are we intentionally developing in migrant churches as 'seed farms' for global multipliers?*

## **Six Foundational Factors**

Dave Patty proposes six factors essential to the Foundational phase of growing an indigenous movement of church-based youth ministry. Here we will review and explore each one further. He identifies that the intended outcome of this phase is "...to lay a relational and spiritual base that will support both expansion and multiplication"; an outcome we must keep as our controlling priority of focus.

**1. Language and Culture.** This is the task of, as much as possible, becoming an 'insider'. This can never fully happen unless one is indigenous born but effectiveness is increased the further down that path one travels. An insider understands and is at home in the culture and communicates in the heart language of the people. In fact one of the best ways to learn the culture is to embark on learning the language experientially by cultural emersion.

If one wants to communicate Christ to a people, he must know them. The key to that knowledge always has been, and always will be, language." (Hesselgrave, Page 355) For indigenous multipliers this is less of a challenge although the principle of becoming an insider in a target culture still applies whether that different culture is a different denominational structure, geographic region or social subculture. Multiplication implies starting in *new* places with *new* people and that requires adopting the stance of a cross-cultural missionary committed to putting assumptions aside, studying to become an insider.

For non-indigenous multipliers this is a real challenge. First response is to want to short cut the process or skirt the issue, a response aided by the increasingly common use of English as a language of education and trade. However, to address the missionary task seriously we cannot avoid this

challenge of language learning. There is simply no substitute for effectiveness especially in keeping with GY1 values in particular, incarnation.

Given that it takes years to learn a language at the level of being able to teach complex concepts (Party suggests at least two years in Czech), we need to consider this challenge on a few fronts. Firstly, we need to address it head on and challenge people to accept the challenge of long-term cross-cultural service and language learning. Sure it's the long-term option but then again, Jesus spent 30 years just growing up as an insider before He even began ministry. So how committed are we to following the strategy of Jesus really?

Secondly, we need to recruit proven multipliers who are already multilingual. In one sense we could assume that if a youth leader can speak more than one language, God may well have "prepared her for such a time as this". These people may be foreign nationals living abroad for study or work or they may be nationals in their home country with a capacity to speak more than one language. Australia, like the USA is a regional centre for international students. It also has large migrant communities with ethnic churches that can provide a pool for recruitment and intentionally cultivating future multipliers and missionaries. Residence of European countries typically speak a number of languages freely making them a potential source of multipliers.

Thirdly, we need to ensure that short term missionaries, visiting trainers and multipliers, limit their expansion until they have trainers (preferably indigenous) who can communicate the concepts in the language of the people. Consideration needs to be given to slowing expansion and exposure to the training until local leaders are raised up and models emerge. Initial contact ought to be aimed at surfacing potential indigenous multipliers, and given the lack of opportunity of the short-term missionary to model the training in practice, they are really looking to connect with leaders who already are demonstrating a commitment to the vision and principles and a high level of competence in ministry skills. They cannot grow someone from seed through short-term exposures. They need to locate and cultivate the emerging leader. They need to focus on *gathering* the right seed, as per above.

**The *process of becoming an insider*** is valuable for far more than learning about language and culture. The missionary gets involved in building relationships with nationals in marketplaces, neighborhoods, community activities, schools, and dubs, learning language conversationally, researching to understand culture and testing that understanding with new friends sharing Christ as they go. It provides opportunity to model in the field contacting, evangelism, humility, prayerful dependence, people skills, compassion, Christlikeness, and so many other ministry skills that we expect multipliers to possess. It also affords the opportunity to demonstrate the responsiveness of unsaved 'secular' young people to the gospel. These are vital to demonstrate and no amount of talking will have the same impact on trainees.

Jesus didn't just teach his trainees that God loved sinners and that the fields were 'white unto harvest' (John 4), he modeled it through his own involvement with irreligious outcasts and the gospel writers record (perhaps with initial surprise) 'he was a friend of tax gatherers and sinners and the poor heard him gladly'. As multipliers we need to model the basics so the high concepts get dusty and dirty in the trainee's real world. The disciples' response in Jn 4:27 was initially "...surprised to find Him talking with a woman". But no one asked, "Why are you talking with her?" They had just returned from the woman's town and based on their cultural prejudice had assumed the people to be unresponsive. Jesus rebukes them saying: "...open your eyes and look..."

*How can we more effectively work together to identify, recruit, train/prepare and deploy bi-cultural bi-lingual multipliers? Discuss: "Consideration needs to be given to slowing expansion and exposure to the advanced levels of training until local leaders are raised up and models emerge."*

**2. Relationships and Trust.** John Maxwell says, "To build trust, a leader must exemplify competence, connection, and character". He also quotes General Schwarzkopf as saying, "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy. " (*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Nelson, 1998. P58.) This is true for all in leadership because before people will buy into a leader's cause or strategy, they must first buy into the leader. Maxwell corrects a common myth that people will automatically buy into and follow a worthy vision or cause. "But that's not how leadership really works. People don't at first follow worthy causes. They follow worthy leaders who promote worthwhile causes. People buy into the leader first, then the leader's vision." (Maxwell, p145)

Building relationships and trust in the early days of a movement is essential on a number of fronts. Obviously with the trainees and leaders with whom we minister, those whom we hope and pray will become multipliers themselves. But equally as important are the less obvious people, those in leadership who might be ignored or avoided in the beginning only to become limiting influences and hindrances to the movement as it grows. Too often task-oriented visionaries fail to recognize the significance of cultivating relationships of trust with people who are not important to their own immediate goals. Because they don't 'need them' and are 'too busy' they build their enterprise with little concern for the insecurities aroused or perceptions of others. This may be expedient but it is shortsighted and culturally insensitive at least. If a relationship of trust hasn't been initiated by us *before* we 'need' something from those people, then it is difficult if not impossible to convey anything but self interest when we suddenly 'get friendly' when we do need them.

We need, to identify the 'gate-keepers' and the influencers and be intentional in demonstrating interest and limited availability to assist in their concerns. Limited availability involves serving others but doesn't mean becoming their servant. It means determining what strategic concerns/needs they have that we can assist with without losing our own focus or effectiveness. It also means being gracious and positive, being on public record affirming the work of others. For missionary activity this means exercising sensitivity in how we report ministry results so that others don't in any way feel we are taking credit for their work or minimizing their contribution and sovereignty. We need to report activity in a way that makes heroes of others and servants of ourselves, strongly affirming the work of others.

*What behaviours assist in building trust and relationships? What behaviours undermine building trust and relationships? With whom do we need to be intentional about building relationships of trust?*

### **3. Emerging Models. "...show them a horse."**

I was sitting in a leadership development course with other Christian leaders from around the world. The topic before us at that point of the week was the difference between principles and values in our philosophy of life and how that impacted upon our daily living. After some stimulating exchanges between a number of the delegates it seemed as though the fog was setting in and the first to be engulfed by it were those from non-English speaking countries. The discussion had become very theoretical and conceptual and a gap existed between the concept in the trainer's mind and those in the minds of the delegates.



At that point a Latin American leader spoke up saying this all had to be related more practically to the everyday life of the ordinary person; it was too conceptual. "In Latin America", he said, "people are more practical. If you are trying to explain to a person what is a horse, you don't keep on using more and more words. If you want them to understand what is a horse, then you show them a horse, 'See. This is a horse!' His point was well made. The most complex things can be understood easily when we can see the real thing in action. Then people can put their own words to the explanation of the reality they can see before them. The explanations and words will vary from culture to culture but the reality will be the same. A horse will be a horse even if called by a different name or explained differently.

In the challenge of communicating a new concept of youth ministry, a new paradigm, there is a clear danger in mistakenly thinking that the answer is more explanation, better training, clearer diagrams, and digital technology. Nothing substitutes for "show me a horse". The very essence of the life of Christ is the incarnation, where the reality understood only in part, took on concrete form in the life experience of the people in order to be more fully and clearly understood. "...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us... and we beheld His glory, that of the One and Only..." (John 1)

What are we talking about when we say a 'model ministry'? This needs careful thought and clearer definition. In my own experience, the 'models' that gave form to the ideas and vision, weren't in strict terms 'Jesus strategy' nor would the leaders have claimed them to be a 'product' of that training. However they inspired me with a sense of what could be achieved and what young people were capable of. They *were* disciplemaking youth ministries, and all the principles and values of ministry espoused in Jesus strategy were readily identifiable as I evaluated them with my grid, but the leaders didn't necessarily hold to *my* theoretical framework (the 'Jesus strategy' grid) in giving *their* explanation of the reality we were both experiencing. That is, they were doing the things my theory required but without any knowledge of or reference to it. Yet I was inspired by the excellence and fruitfulness of their exceptional church youth ministry. Dave Patty refers to a similar vision experience in visiting Willow Creek youth ministry on a Sonlife field visit. So what is 'a model' and what do we need to be identifying and developing?

For 6 years before having any contact with Sonlife or offering any strategy seminars, I worked in a number of situations in Australia to develop working models; to..."show them a horse". The most effective situation was a partnership with a large Baptist church whose youth pastor, an outstanding leader, was committed to building a disciplemaking youth ministry and was using the Master Plan of Evangelism (Coleman) as a basic text. Given our basic compatibility of values and principles of ministry (ie. philosophy and theology) we began working together to develop a training model ministry with the vision of multiplying leaders nationally. That partnership continued on through the youth pastors next two successors training hundreds of leaders and exposing them to an exceptional youth ministry for over 15 years. Was it a model? Yes, all the principles of ministry could be readily seen in operation. However, the volunteer leadership mayor may not have been able to articulate the 'why' and 'how' details of the theoretical model as per the strategy of Jesus.

It's with interest now that I observe that most of the key leaders now involved in the YMA movement in Australia can trace their first exposure to attending the five day Summer School of Youth Leadership at that initial model ministry church. What did they come for? Training and theory? Not primarily. They came to observe a noted local church youth ministry in action and gain insights as to how it worked and why it was successful (probably to copy the program!). They knew of and were exposed to the model *before* being exposed to the theory (the radically different philosophy of ministry upon which it was built). They came to learn from proven practitioners not

trainers. The model gave credibility to the training. It was only after a few days of the training that the new paradigm broke through in their minds and they could see it: this was not youth ministry as it was typically done. I suggest there is significance in the sequence of exposure of leaders *first* to the model they can experience *then* to theoretical training as explanatory framework rather than first exposure being to theory and then to a model. One problem is that unless the existing paradigm of ministry has been broken down - a difficult thing to do apart from experience - people tend to hear and interpret the new 'information' in terms of the old experiential boxes.

Emerging models may already exist in the country/region/denomination and by networking and partnership we can assist the leadership to achieve a greater vision. So how are we searching them out, and what will identify them? (refer to 5. A Core of Key Nationals, for more on this point)

*What significance do you feel there is in whether a person is first exposed to training/theory OR working model as to the development of an indigenous movement and the attraction of emerging leaders? What are the dangers inherent in too few or too similar models?*

**Assumption: people tend to reproduce their experience**

As a general rule, people will reproduce their experience. Thus the importance of the movement builder actually building an effective working model to demonstrate for and expose people to a living example of what he/she is talking about. Without a working model that grows with the involvement of the indigenous leaders, those leaders will have little hope of ever carrying it on successfully let alone reproducing it.

To divorce the training and principles taught in 'Jesus strategy' from a real time experience (as opposed to a simulated fast track training experience over concentrated time) is to undermine their integrity and encourage theorists rather than practitioners. There is no end to new ideas, theories and models of youth ministry espoused by more and more people who make a living from writing or teaching. What the world lacks is not new ideas but real working models of true discipling ministry that actually make a difference reaching lost kids for Christ, building them up in their faith and personal ministry so they in turn are involved in reaching their peers creating a multiplying movement. More than anything else, those who seek to build multiplying movements of indigenous church based youth ministry MUST build reproducible model ministries and raise up leaders from within them who's experience of 'church' and ministry are the new not the old order, leaders who don't even 'think' the strategy but who just unconsciously live it. As with language, the indigenous born doesn't have to think about speaking the language as does someone who was taught it as a second language. For them it is an unconscious automatic response.

People will reproduce their experience. Therefore we must break the cycle and develop an environment in which to grow a new generation of leaders who will build the new rather than reproduce the old traditional ways of church. We must create an environment within which to grow new leaders where as far as possible we can say, "go and do as was done with you... whatever you have seen, heard or received from me... imitate these things...".

Of course they must be able to distinguish principles from practice and not be mechanistic or model bound in their movement building. But they need to have *experienced the reality* of the principles *in* practice; they need to know how to 'do it' not just 'talk it' or 'teach it'. They need to see functional ministry structures that serve the values of ministry rather than try to fit new ways into old inherited structures. They need to *know* in the core of their being that "this really works in *my* country and culture, this is not a mythical ministry run by a super spiritual race that we talk about, dream about

and contrast ourselves and reality to. This is a real ministry, I've been there, it's made up of ordinary people like me, a reality that can be reproduced."

*What are we looking for as essential elements in emerging models? How do we ensure that the emerging movement is known foremost for its effectiveness in winning, building, training and multiplying youth (practical ministry) rather than for good training (theory)? What are the additional challenges, inherent dangers and possible solutions to ensuring models are developed in situations where there is no resident GYI multiplier (ie. working through short-term visits)?*

#### **4. A Core of Tools and Training Materials**

Dr Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, arguable the fastest growing, and certainly the largest mission movement in the last half century, continually states the need for a common core of transferable concepts together with transferable and adaptable tools' and training materials. So from the original Four Spiritual Laws to the Jesus film concepts were given form as hands on simple tools that were readily transferable. This has been very effective. However the danger has been that in some cases, people have failed to understand or own the essential concept that gave rise to a tool and have then stubbornly persisted with the use of a tool even when in the new context it no longer achieved the intended outcome. In some cases indigenous leaders felt no liberty to "change" things. So sharing the Four Laws was seen to be sharing the gospel even when it was shown to be ineffective in some contexts. The purpose for which it was designed was no longer being fulfilled. A new tool was needed or a new adaptation that would be true to the core principle of initiative personal evangelism more effectively.

Internationally, CCC is intentionally shifting the emphasis by refocusing on values, principles, vision and mission so that staff reaffirm the essential non-negotiables that identify them as CCC (the core distinctives), while encouraging innovation, experimentation, creativity and contextualization of tools and materials. More and more the prototypes of these things need to come from the grass roots up not from the top down. 'What has this experience got to say to GYI who aren't even a single global organization with a chain of command but a partnership of many organizations?

I suggest that GYI needs to keep the non-negotiables at a minimum clearly articulating them primarily in terms of principles, vision, mission, values. Then we must develop a climate that not only encourages innovation, adaptation, and contextualization of tools and materials but insists upon it. The great strength of such abundant resources in tools and training materials in some countries actually could weaken other indigenous movements in their Foundational Phase by short circuiting their development. *King* Saul tried to help young David fight Goliath by providing the best tools he had in the form of his own armour. But that was neither a need nor a help in David's case for he needed to do it, in God's power, using his own expertise as a shepherd not a soldier unsophisticated, inexpensive and unorthodox but undeniably effective.

Reflecting on the YMA journey I recognize a tension between availability of so many quality resources and training packages from Sonlife and the restraint and wisdom to only respond to demonstrated local need in order to retain our identity as a 'home grown' movement. Just because a resource is brilliant and available in America doesn't mean it is a local need or a priority elsewhere. The essence of this tension is the difference between being a training provider and nurturing the growth of an indigenous movement. The former is about market coverage and distribution; the later is a much more an intuitive organic process, requiring spiritual discernment and leadership wisdom.

Again emerging models are the key to the development of tools and materials that are grown in indigenous soil, cultivated, refined, debugged, tested, tried and transferable. This is essential if we are going to be in a strong position to fulfill the goal of the Multiplication phase 4 of the movement. The homegrown product will multiply more effectively in the long term. We must exercise great constraint and wisdom and avoid answering questions that haven't even been asked or supplying resources and materials that, good as they are, are from another context, another culture and a movement at a different phase of development. This is exaggerated all the more given the sophistication, abundance and consumerism/packaging of the US context in contrast to the simplicity, pragmatism and in some cases subsistence poverty of others.

We must also distinguish between the core tools and training content/concepts and the delivery systems and packaging they come in. There ought to be great variety and innovation in delivery systems of training and approaches to raising leaders and nurturing emerging models. One country may find short seminars are effective. Another may adopt an intensive internship approach. Another may opt for a combination supported by formal coaching. GYI is not bound by any common delivery system or package. The issue is one of meaning not form. However, within each developing indigenous movement the multipliers must determine and refine what transferable core tools and resources they are going to use to multiply their movement. Complex concepts and principles are more transferable from generation to generation when captured in a simple mechanism or tool. An example is the Strategy Arrow Board developed by YMA as a coaching tool to help keep a leader focused and self-tracking on the essentials of a disciple making ministry. It is a simple tool integrating many core concepts in a practical way.

So what essential core tools and training do we need in GYI? This would be a good point of discussion. Rather than suggest what we need I prefer here to offer some general guiding criteria.

- a. Be Minimalist. Tools and materials must only be developed in response to demonstrated need not want. What does the movement really need rather than what will people like/accept?
- b. K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid)
- c. Inexpensive and reproducible locally from 'off the shelf' components.
- d. Adaptable, flexible for a range of ministry settings (eg. Youth, church, woman, children as a one size fits all)
- e. Proven in the field and culture as practical and effective.
- f. Principle rich. Materials and tools need to focus indigenous leaders on the primaries of core principles and fundamental processes rather than particular applications of them.
- g. Contextualized: Translated, tested, tried, tuned.
- h. Shared through GYI.
- i. Necessary. In other words, if someone else has already developed something (that fits a-h) that can do the job with minor adaptations then adapt and use it. Don't reinvent the wheel.

I believe that some of the best tools and materials are yet to be developed or identified and they will flow from newer movements and newer contexts where experimentation is at their heart. They will emerge from the pioneering fringe rather than the well-established centre of GYI. They need to be able to flow back through to the rest of GYI. There needs to be a communication system to facilitate sharing of ideas, findings from experience and information on new tools/materials so that each member can hear from each member. A 'www' notice-board may be an idea with agreed upon categories for tools and training onto which we can all post our latest developments or resources we have found.

*What essential core tools and training do we need in GYI? Why didn't Jesus leave concrete tools/materials and in what ways was that an advantage for the emerging movement? What are the essential qualities and skills required of an indigenous leaders to be effective in developing tools and materials, given that not everyone is? What must we be aware of as we sow the seeds in the foundational phase to ensure that a movement stands on its own feet and avoids becoming simply a satellite of the bigger benefactor?*

## **5. A Core of Key Nationals Who Share the Vision**

This element overlaps with point 2 Emerging models, as the emerging model makers are obviously among the key nationals that need to be drawn together into a core. In this early Foundational phase of a movement we need to be raising the flag of disciple making youth ministry articulating our vision loudly, constantly and widely so that anybody anywhere who identifies with that flag can find each other, begin to share a common vision and sense of 'community'.

We must be able to answer the obvious question of a key national leader, "why should I join with you?" What value can we add to their ministry? Whose vision and passion is this about, ours or theirs? Who is the servant of whom? The key is not to get people to own 'our' vision and help us meet 'our' needs, but to help them clearly articulate *their* vision and needs and show them how their involvement in the movement will maximize their impact.

In Australia we began seeking out and visiting with anyone we heard of who seemed to share the same vision and values. We introduced them to each other, gathered them together for breakfasts and informal retreats and in time formed a network committed to nurture each other as leaders and our ministries as developing models. The network provided a neutral shared forum for further trust and from it emerged leaders who more intentionally identified with the movement of YMA who were the servant leaders of the wider network. We dreamed the vision, explored the mission, sharpening and supporting one-another as we wrestled with the realities of growing a ministry in 'Aussie' soil. In a country with a small population and a very small Christian scene we learnt that we need each other (1 Cor.12.21 "... the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" So don't!). We need to seek out and encourage anybody who shares the same vision, network with anybody who shares the same mission and be open to partner with anybody who shares the same values and strategy.

I have added the word "key" to Patty's point so it reads 'A core of key nationals who share the vision'. We need to be looking to identify those God is raising up as leaders among leaders, multipliers and movement builders. Not all who gather around the 'flag' are going to be movement leaders or even model makers. We will need to seek them out initially while working to grow them out of the emerging models that can become intentional leadership farms producing future multipliers.

Some further considerations regarding the core of key nationals are:

- a. Seek to have them broadly representative of the wider Body of Christ with a strong non-denominational value. This avoids the movement becoming labeled as a particular denomination making it harder to embrace by other denominations.
- b. Keep articulating the vision and mission of GYI over and over again and create a vehicle/forum of some sort to facilitate this. Otherwise people will become distracted by other good things and the endless work of doing 'church'.

c. Establish a 'Movement Ministry Team' structure that works outside of local church and denominational boundaries so that leaders can build something regional or national that is not at the mercy of incumbent church leadership who may not share the movement vision. In Australia, YMA recruited key leaders to become Associates so they could be contributing to and owning the movement beyond their local church through involvement in the organization of YMA. So whether they moved churches or not, they could have a consistency contributing to the wider vision.

d. Work to help educate those in authority over the key leader as to the significance of their wider involvement, their ministry effectiveness and the importance of the contribution that church/denomination is making to the wider mission work of the Kingdom. Help them recognize the advantages to their interests.

e. Focus on building 'champions' through coaching and accountability so that the key leader grows in competence and builds a modelling ministry. This is key for long-term integrity.

f. As the movement grows, guard the relationally intensive culture focussing on growing the core as a *close* knit team with deepening love and commitment to each-other not just to the ministry. As was the model of Jesus, the movement leadership must increasingly focus on the personal development of the core team as the ministry gains momentum. This is not about large conferences for motivation and vision casting so much as it is about informal retreats, social contact, laughter, tears, personal prayer and shared memories. As a movement grows we must guard against the danger of losing that relationally intensive climate that nurtured its beginning. We begin to say, "Remember when *we used* to that's what really got me fired up about the vision."

g. Involve leaders in activity (speaking, training, assisting, helping lead) beyond their own ministry so they see how they are part of the bigger picture and get exposure to ministry beyond their own local context.

*What activity have you found helpful in gathering a core of key national leaders? How do we balance serving the needs of leaders and wider networking with the demands of our own ministry development? What are the danger signs of a movement losing the "relationally intensive climate that nurtured its beginning"? What is your experience of this danger and how are you working to avoid it?*

## **6. A Fire**

On this point, Dave Patty wrote: "Somewhere passion has to ignite, lives have to be radically transformed, and God's power has to begin to be evident. Until this happens, the danger is that a dead program or empty structure will be multiplied rather than a living, growing movement.

This is where we come back to the vision of GYI, "...so that every young person in every culture has the opportunity to respond to the claims of Christ". It's not about establishing movements, or structures or even local church ministries that explain what they do in terms of the strategy of Jesus. These are all means to an end. These are all aspects of our mission that we constantly work at, but the driving motivation at the heart of it all is to fulfill the vision. A red-hot fire, a passion for reaching every young person, a love for kids must characterize who we are and all we do. It must be passed on to all in the movement least we become explainable in terms of resources, training and human energy.

Patty points out that in the work in Czech Republic, that fire was first evident in the lives of the newly converted young people reached through the initial modeling ministry. The same was my experience in Australia in that the 'fire' was first evident in and passed on from the early models of ministry, kids getting saved, disciplined and equipped for radical peer-to-peer ministry. Other churches and leaders couldn't believe what they saw commenting that they never thought God could use kids in such significant ways. In those early models, the youth led the adults into a deeper commitment to mission and personal devotion. Other church leaders observing the fire responded, "we want that in our church". The importance of direct ministry with youth - working models - is clear in these examples.

This raises an interesting question: If the 'fire' needs to be sparked and nurtured in the fireplace of a model ministry, how can it be developed in situations where there is no resident multiplier? If the beginning point of a GYI movement is training from an outside trainer without already emerging indigenous models, how is the fire to be ignited and passed on?

One solution to this problem could be to involve teams of young people on short-term mission accompanying the trainers so that peer-to-peer ministry and the 'fire' can be modeled. Another key is to have evaluation tools and checks for leaders that ask specifically about evangelism, conversion and peer-to-peer ministry. At least this will highlight this area as a primary health indicator.

Too often I am concerned as I talk to youth leaders who have completed YMA training, talking the strategy and structuring their ministry in accordance with it but whose ministry is not showing any net gain for the Kingdom. That is, they are going through the motions and talking the talk but there is no widespread radical life transformation evident among kids. They are basically the same middle class churchy group structured and described differently. Where's the fire? "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor. 4:20) Whilst in the final analysis this has to be the work of the Holy Spirit, we must give careful thought as to what we can do to help ignite the flame and what supportive structures and programs would feed and fan it? We must also identify those quenching factors (structures, leaders, prayerlessness, complacency etc) and eliminate or minimize them.

*What can we do to help ignite 'the fire' and what supportive structures and programs would feed and fan it? Identify those quenching factors (structures, leaders, prayerlessness, complacency etc) and ways to eliminate or minimize them.*

## **"Conclusion**

As we sow the seeds of an indigenous movement of church based youth ministry we need to do thorough Preparation as to good soil, right seed and timing. The Foundational planting and initial growth must be given careful thought so as to maximize future multiplication. As with farming there is much that is out of human control and beyond human influence. We need to be mindful of our dependence on the Holy Spirit to birth a movement of God! Yet we must be knowledgeable and intentional about those things that are within our control or influence, learning from pooled experience and reflection, trial and error. The stakes are too high to do otherwise. Jesus said in Jn 4, "...do you not say, 'Four more months and then the harvest'? But I say, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

**The Mission:** To mobilize indigenous movements of church-based youth ministries

**The Vision:** so that every young person in every culture has the opportunity to respond to the claims of Christ.