SAMPLE:
POSTCARDS FROM CORINTH
WORLD POVERTY  p. 159
WSN, and a brief history of the world

BOOK REPORT  p. 166
Being discipled by the world’s greatest Christians

SECTION V
BRIEFS AND LETTERS

THIRTY YEAR’S WAR  p. 187
On theological debates

YOU ALWAYS SAY THAT  p. 190
On conflict resolution

THE WHOLE TRUTH  p. 193
On Christian counseling

WINDOW OF THE WORD  p. 197
On journaling

PAINT BY NUMBERS  p. 200
On God’s will

HEADING NORTH  p. 203
On using the Compass

LOST IN TRANSLATION  p. 206
On Bible versions

WHO’S IN CHURCH?  p. 208
On being a parachurch organization

HOPE YOU GUESS MY NAME  p. 210
On spiritual battle

EVERYBODY’S DIFFERENT  p. 213
On personality tests

SEVEN KINDS OF SMART  p. 216
On reaching multiple intelligences

STUFFING MY SOUL  p. 218
On fasting

YOU DON’T GET THE GIST  p. 220
On scripture memory

SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE  p. 222
On initiative and relational evangelism

DESIRE FOR DUTY  p. 225
On relational discipleship

JUMP START  p. 228
On Basic Follow-up

EVERYONE HAS LIMITS  p. 231
On discipling from your strengths

MULTIPLE MOVEMENTS  p. 234
On discipling leaders of ministries

THE REAL WORK  p. 237
On praying for our disciples

BLIND DATE  p. 239
On the question of dating

SECTION VI
FOUNDATIONS AND HISTORY

SELECTION  p. 245
Discipling the right people

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION  p. 250
Teaching disciples to teach others

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN  p. 257
Developing a personal plan for every disciple

RELATIONSHIP, SCRIPTURE
AND MINISTRY  p. 263
The components of biblical discipleship

BASIC DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES  p. 267
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Hey.
We’re doing well here. I can’t say the trip has been a bunch of laughs—but it’s been good. Hard—but good. We’ve come several thousand miles and I barely remember what it was like to be there. Much happening.
I’ll write soon. —Sam

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Chapter One

Learning
The lost art of making people feel stupid

If a disciple is fundamentally a student or learner, then a discipler is fundamentally a teacher. Teaching and learning. That is the raw essence of discipleship.

In Jesus’ day there were all sorts of people who gathered to hear Him teach. The ones who liked what they heard and followed Him around were called His disciples. One time He miraculously fed a bunch of them. So they kept following. But they were interested for the wrong reasons, like filling their bellies, so they became disinterested when Jesus told them they had to eat his flesh. They stopped being His disciples and went home.

Then there were the twelve disciples who Jesus chose and to whom he gave special attention. The eating flesh thing was weird to them too, but they were committed to following Him no matter what. Peter said, “Where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Their learning led them to belief and trust in Jesus because that was what He relentlessly taught and offered them.

This is what our aim must be as well. We must teach people to believe and trust in Jesus in their actual life and not just in their what-I-believe-because-I-am-a-Christian life. This chapter is about how to do that.

A CASE FOR CUSSING AND THREATS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

I read a great book a few years ago about the Sermon on the Mount so I wanted to teach it to some guys. I asked a student I knew, Ben, if he could round up some fellas for a Bible study. He got six guys: four fraternity presidents and two chaplains. They had all grown up going to church and had probably heard sermons on this passage before.

The first week was introductory and pleasant. At the end I gave them homework—study the first twenty verses and be ready to explain what Jesus was saying. Sensing that they had no reason to do this assignment, I warned them that they better come knowing their stuff because I was going to argue with whatever they said.

They all came back and around the circle we went. Most of them disagreed with each other, but when they didn’t I would ask all sorts of antagonizing questions. After thirty minutes, they were so confused about what Jesus was saying, and what they were saying,
that they asked me what I thought. My initial thought was that this was the first time a student had actually asked me to tell them what I thought about a passage. I said, “I could give you my opinion, but I’m curious why you think Jesus meant that.”

Then Ben blurted out— like we were on Jerry Springer and not at Bible Study— “Okay, tell me what you think this passage means and then I am going to kick your a**.” That was the turning point. Until then I had been trying to teach people a bunch of stuff that they only mildly wanted to learn. Now Ben was acting like I hid his car keys and wouldn’t tell him where. Think about this for a second: A student was actually cussing at me because I wouldn’t tell him what I thought about a passage in the Bible.

I knew I couldn’t take him, so I gave my interpretation. They were not as impressed as I thought they would be. They argued with me because they thought it would be cool to see Ben beat up the Bible study leader. At a deeper level they had a genuine hunger to learn the Bible. It never felt so good not to have all the answers. Nobody left with that warm feeling you get when the lesson ties together neatly in the end with clean application points. We didn’t even pray.

**DUMPING ON PEOPLE STINKS**

I know more about the Bible than most of the students I disciple. I could have showed up that day at Bible study and simply dumped everything I had learned about those twenty verses on them, annotated charts and the whole deal. They may have thought I was smart and worth following, I mean, that Jesus was worth following. It could have been neat and tidy with prayer requests and one thing they could do that week to apply what they learned to their lives. I didn’t do that because I was tired of pretending that it works.

I figured they would be better off studying for hours only to come up with the “wrong answers.” If that makes you uneasy, then you care too much about making sure people have all the correct information about their spiritual life. Just stop for a moment and think about how process-oriented Jesus was with His disciples. He was more concerned that they loved Him, not that they had the right answers. I believe that we generally want what is best for our disciples. It’s just that some of our methods do not accomplish what we want.

Take, for example, this group of frat guys. My goal for them was that they would interact with Jesus more relationally. A good beginning, I thought, would be for them to think of him as a person. Well that’s easy, right? Just tell them that He was God in the flesh, tempted in every way that we are tempted, and that He wept. But I was not trying to prove a point. I was trying to help them experience a person. So instead of explaining to them what Jesus was saying, I made them wrestle with it. It’s the difference between me telling a guy all about a girl he likes and letting him discover her through relational pursuit. He would certainly be wrong and make mistakes along the way, but his attraction to her would lead him to greater intimacy much more than knowledge
I wish you could have been there for our third meeting. They came in like first-year law students, with their scribbled notes and coffee eyes, ready to make their case. We argued less that day, though I didn’t escape without being called names that I cannot repeat. I don’t know of another scenario where I would boast about such a thing, but this was different. It was frat-tastic.

I have tried all kinds of tricks to get guys to read their Bible: food, cash, guilt, quizzes, you name it. I’ve never had much success because I’m always giving out all the answers. What I learned with the frat guys is that people are more likely to learn when they have to figure stuff out for themselves. It’s kind of like when you have a tune in your head and can’t stop thinking about it until you remember the song title. Because we never totally resolved everything in our meetings, our discussions would turn in their heads all week. It’s annoying to feel like you don’t know stuff. So they would study, not because it was their assignment, but because they actually wanted to learn.

We never prescribed application points. I’m not against it. It just never seemed to fit. I guess it’s hard to apply something you don’t really understand. After our fourth meeting, a few of the guys hung around after I left and decided to get together at seven the next morning. The guy who told me said, “We decided to meet every week the morning after our Bible study just to pray about what we are learning and talk about how we can help each other apply it to our lives.”

I was blown away. I could have done ten lessons on accountability and community and fellowship and not had a response like that. It wasn’t about being smart at Bible study anymore. What they were doing was genuine and desperate—learning how to relate to Jesus. Learning is easy. Wanting to learn is not.

We would never tell a non-Christian that all he needs to do to follow Jesus is be faithful to certain activities like Bible study and accountability and prayer. So why would you prescribe that for a Christian? These things are not indicators of transformation. They are only means of transformation.

I was in four honors classes in the ninth grade. Three of them were not hard, and I don’t think English would have been either if Satan’s girlfriend wasn’t my teacher. Realistically she was too old to be Satan’s girlfriend, but nobody liked her.

The second week of school was the first open house where parents got the chance
to meet the teachers. My classmates and I had told our parents how evil this teacher was for making things so hard on us. And since parents love their children, they all came ready to give this teacher a piece of their mind. She was a no-show.

We found out later she was attending a ceremony where she received a teacher of the year award. This caused our parents to turn on us. She was not going to get fired. Even worse, I began to feel she loved me and wanted to help me become a better person. I worked so hard in that class that I fell in love with English. No teacher ever frustrated me as much as her, but in the end I loved her for what she did for us.

I think the frat guys wanted me to make it easier on them, but in the end I think they loved me for helping them relate to Jesus instead of dumping information on them. And better than loving me, they fell in love with Jesus.

ONE WAY TO STOP TALKING IS TO ASK QUESTIONS

What I learned in the fratmosphere— that tension seeks resolution— is a governing principle in how I disciple people these days. I look for ways to make people uneasy about what they know. I do this by asking questions, and instead of answering them when the silence gets awkward I just keep asking more. I’m not comfortable with silence, but filling it with words about what I believe does not help me understand what my disciples believe. And what they believe is the central issue to their discipleship. Jesus was good at this. He answered questions with questions. He made people think about what they were saying and why they were saying it.

I did it once. It happened a few weeks ago. Two students, Michael and Casey, asked me to disciple them this semester. I did not know them very well, so I planned nothing for our first meeting. The first fifteen minutes were awkward, like a first date. They were expecting something from me—some secret key to the door of their spiritual success, or at least some kind of plan for that meeting. I had nothing. I asked them silly questions such as, “How was your summer?” and “What’s God been teaching you?” Then one of the guys set off an alarm. He said something about God was showing him something that he knew intellectually but did not experience. I don’t even remember what the particular thing was. I just knew that he had hit on some universal and gigantic problem. Maybe my questions weren’t so lame after all. Or maybe it just shows that even lame questions are better than no questions.

Most discipleship materials and discussions I’ve used are clean and linear. They usually have a subject (Holy Spirit) which may be introduced by some diagnostic questions (which circle represents your life?) to surface the problem (carnal life), followed by some teaching points that explain the subject matter, and then a point of application (pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit). This is painfully general, I know, but this is typically how it goes. Disciples learn something (maybe), but there is no tension, no frustration, no feeling stupid. It’s too packaged and pleasant to affect actual life.
PEOPLE ARE GOVERNED BY WHAT THEY WANT

I knew I didn't want to dump on him. Here is where creating tension kicked in. I sat up in my chair, interested for the first time.

“Yeah, we all know too much,” I said. “I had a group of pledges one year that grew up in a really good church, but what they knew and what they experienced were two different worlds. I told them at our first meeting that I thought they were all full of crap. Let me ask you what I asked them.”

I continued. “If Jesus were here physically and were your discipler this semester instead of me, do you think you would have a better shot at growing spiritually than you do now with me as your discipler and His Spirit living inside you?”

Casey smirked and asked, “What do you mean ‘here physically’?”

“I mean here, physically. He could be right by your side as much as you wanted him to be.”

“Well, then I’d take that,” said Casey.

“Why?”

“Because he would be straight with me, you know. He could see into my heart and just tell it like it is. There wouldn’t be any question about what I’m supposed to do.”

“So this seems like a no-brainer to you?” I asked.

“I guess,” responded Casey, confident but suspicious.

I turned to Michael, “What about you?”

“Well, I know the right answer is the Holy Spirit but since that is what I have had all along, and that hasn’t worked out so well, I would honestly say Jesus just to try something new.”

They chose the same answer but for different reasons. Michael knew the “right answer.” Casey was left wondering why his answer was “wrong” and wishing he hadn’t been so sure of himself. Someone was going to look stupid, and nothing creates tension like the potential of looking stupid.

What people know does not impress me anymore. I want to know what they want.
In this case, they wanted Jesus as their discipler instead of me, but at the expense of having His Spirit inside them. This scenario has its apparent advantages, but it reveals something about them at the level of their desires. I already knew at this point what it says about them, but again, what I know will very rarely change anyone. They have to discover it. So we continued:

I asked both of them, “If you would be better off having Jesus with you instead of in you, why didn’t God establish life that way?” I got blank stares. So I continued. “I mean, the disciples wanted Jesus to stay and He told them at least twice that it was better for them if He left.”

Casey, probably sensing that he might be the one to look stupid, questioned, “When did He say that?”

I showed him the verses. “So why is it better?” (i.e. Why were you wrong?) More blank stares.

Let’s review. I could have explained all this to them on the front end and avoided hurting anyone’s self-esteem. They would know having the Holy Spirit is better, but it would only be head knowledge. Instead, I asked two simple questions and surfaced that deep down they really just wanted Christianity to be easier.

“Okay, Casey, you said you would like it because Jesus would shoot straight with you. He could look in your heart and tell you that you are full of crap. Then what would you do about it?”

“What do you mean?” Casey asked.

“Think about it this way. If Lebron James was your personal coach in basketball, could you play in the NBA?”

“No.”

“Why not? You would have one of the best players in the world teaching you.”

“But that doesn’t mean I could play like him.”

“What if somehow LeBron could live inside you and play through you? Then could you play in the NBA?”

Casey gets an epiphany, “I get it. If I didn’t have His Spirit in me,
I couldn’t do what he tells me I need to do. It wouldn’t matter that Jesus was here telling me to do it.”

Casey was getting somewhere now. I turned to Michael again. “Okay dude, you knew that already. So why isn’t that what you want?” “I don’t know.”

“Well you said it wasn’t working. Why not?”

This is a weird spot to be in. If he doesn’t identify himself as the problem, then he is saying that God’s way of doing things doesn’t work. He doesn’t want to believe either one. This tension between what we know to be the right answer and what we really believe gets to the heart of Casey’s initial statement, the thing that started all this.

“Okay. We’re saying that God has given us everything we need to walk with Him,”

I said. “Everything you need to be courageous, kind, humble, unselfish, etc., is in you. So why isn’t our life characterized by those things?”

Michael spoke up, “To use your analogy, I think it’s because we don’t let God play through us.”

“So what keeps us from letting God play in our lives?”

“For me, like even if Lebron lived in me, and even though I am not as good, I might not let him play because I want to be the one playing. It’s like I’d rather play badly than let someone else play for me.”

I wondered if Michael knew how deep and insightful that statement was. The two of them identified a few more obstacles to letting God play in our lives, such as busyness and laziness.

I asked them what they wanted out of today. I said, “Do you typically just think about getting through the day with as much happiness and as little pain as possible?” They gave a nod of concession. I asked, “Is it safe to say that if you didn’t want much of anything today that you also didn’t want God to play in your life?”

I explained that  I thought a major dilemma in Christian life is that we often have general desires that do not find their way into our day-to-day life. Then I said, “It seems to me that letting God play in our lives has a lot to do with simply wanting him to.”

They liked that because it sounded simple. Then Casey asked, “How do I make myself want something?” He had finally discovered the nerve center of everything we
were talking about. The answer to that question holds the key to the universal and gigantic problem.

PEOPLE KNOW THEY HAVE PROBLEMS BUT THEY DON’T BELIEVE IT

Michael and Casey did not come to our meeting that day thinking that they had a problem and needed my help to fix it. They came to be discipled, and in their minds, discipleship meant meeting with someone once a week. I could have told them on the front end that they had a problem and that the solution had something to do with what they want. But they wouldn’t have cared. Just like non-Christians don’t care when we tell them about their problem and God’s solution. They only care if they believe it.

That is why our discipleship efforts must be aimed not at what people know, but at what they believe. And the best way to find out what your disciples believe is to ask questions that surface what they want. What they want is what my friend Bob Thune calls heart idols. Once they discover their heart idols, they ask the question, “How do I make myself want something else?”

I don’t recommend asking your disciples how they can turn from their lame desires to a desire to want to follow Jesus. They need to discover this question at the end of their rope. They need to ask it with a sense of helplessness in their gut.

That is the way Casey asked, “How do I make myself want something else?” Fortunately for me our time was up. “Good question Casey, Why don’t you guys think about how to do that and we’ll pick it up next week.”
Chapter Two

Gospel
Or, How I learned to disciple a transsexual

My friend Ryan is a transsexual. He used to hate God, but now he's at least lukewarm toward trusting Jesus. I want to share a few insights into how I've discipled Ryan. That way if you ever disciple a transsexual you'll have some idea of where to begin.

The obvious problem you're probably noticing is that Ryan is not a Christian. At first it was a challenge to disciple someone who hadn't even trusted in Jesus yet! But the more I did it, the easier it became. You see, evangelism and discipleship are fundamentally the same thing: pointing people toward Jesus as their all-satisfying treasure. So don't get all worried thinking that this chapter doesn't apply to you. It does. Even if you're discipling Christians instead of unbelieving transsexuals.

The reason I met Ryan was because I didn't ask enough questions. Had I been more careful on the front end, I could have avoided the whole messy situation. We have this student in our college community named Amy. Amy is the most Jesus-loving, extraverted, bubbly person I've ever met. And she's extremely hard to say no to, because she says things like, "Jesus told me to talk to this person!" Or, "The Lord is totally working in your life!" Things that make you think Jesus must have ridden in the car with her on the way over. Amy stopped me one week before our Wednesday night prayer meeting to ask if I'd meet with a friend of hers from school – a homosexual who was not yet a believer in Christ, but had been asking lots of questions about faith. I didn't really want to, but she was so enthusiastic, so happy in Jesus, so convicting with her "you're a pastor and this is your job" tone of voice. So I agreed.

Then, after I'd said yes, she proceeded to tell me the rest of the story. Ryan was an outcast because he dresses as a woman once a week. He'd scheduled a sex-change operation for next spring. He was "married" to a lesbian as a mere formality, to allow the two of them to discreetly pursue their homosexual lifestyles. His parents had disowned him and he hadn't set foot in a church since childhood. I feigned utter confidence in Amy's presence and assured her I'd love to meet with Ryan.

The next morning, I hit my knees and prayed out of my own dire inadequacy. I have never had much success in reaching out to homosexuals. I mean, I come across as harsh and judgmental and arrogant and selfish—to Christians.

That night I met Amy and Ryan at a coffee shop. In those first few minutes, God did a profound work in my life. I was expecting Dennis Rodman in a wedding dress or something. What I found was a human being named Ryan, created in the image of...
God, with the same wounds and soul-scars and questions as you and me and everyone else.

Don’t get me wrong: there was great discomfort on both sides of the table. It was worse than a first date. Ryan was shifty and uneasy. I could tell he was testing the waters, to see if he could trust me. I felt awkward too, afraid that at any moment he would discover that I was Genghis Khan and would stand up and yell obscenities at me and make a big scene. Part of my fear was self interest, but part of it was an honest concern for the kingdom of God. I was sitting across from a guy deeply wounded by Christians. He had finally found one bubbly follower whom he could trust. Now he was risking interaction with a real, live minister one more time. If I didn’t win his trust, this might be the last time he thought about Jesus. But if I could show how much God cared about him, maybe he’d hate God a little less. And that would be big.

My goal as I tell Ryan’s story is to convince you that discipleship must be centered on the gospel. To see true heart transformation in our disciples, they must delight in Jesus more than money or love or ambition or control or self interest. Remind them of their deep brokenness and sinfulness so that they despair of their own efforts. This is the “bad news” of the gospel. Then rejoice in the powerful grace of God through the cross until they feel and believe God’s radical love. This is the “good news” of the gospel. The same gospel that saves sinners also sanctifies the saints.

YOU’RE A SINNER, AND JESUS IS YOUR ONLY HOPE

We tend to think of the gospel message only in the context of evangelism, the door you walk through to get “in.” Once you’re in, then you move beyond the gospel to deeper biblical principles.

Ryan was pretty sure we were “in” and he was “out.” He believed that in the eyes of the average Christian, he was a really bad guy—a transsexual. A pastor had told him once that he was on an express train to hell because of his lifestyle. I wondered if that pastor would say the same thing to a perpetual gossip or a legalist or someone who eats too much. So Ryan consistently steered the conversation toward his lifestyle. He had been to the gay church in town, and they told him that his lifestyle didn’t matter. On the surface, he was fishing for me to say something similar: “It’s okay to be transsexual. You can still follow Jesus.” But underneath, I sensed a much more powerful question in play: “Am I more broken, more sinful, more hopeless than you?”

I moved the conversation away from Ryan’s lifestyle and toward the common brokenness and rebellion of humanity. I told him the real issue wasn’t his gender confusion. It was his sin. He expected to hear he was worse than the guy next door. I told him he wasn’t. Our external sins may be different, but our hearts are all the same. Then I took it a step further: I told him about my own sin.

“Ryan, do you want to know about me? I am a control freak. I like to have everything under my power. I like to put myself in the place of God and manage the outcomes. I am rude and harsh toward my wife and kids. I am judgmental when people
don’t live up to my standards. I fail to love people the way Jesus does. I love people on my terms, the way I think they deserve to be loved, based on my criteria. I am uncar ing and critical and resentful toward those who don’t see things my way. I bow down and sell my soul every day to the idol of control. Ryan, I am a sinner, and Jesus is my only hope.”

Ryan began to soften. The conversation turned a corner. He began to realize his lifestyle was a secondary issue. Here I was, a happily married minister, telling him that my heart was as dirty and sinful and broken as his. The only difference was that I was trusting in Jesus to make me right with God and transform my heart, and he wasn’t.

No thinking follower of Christ would look at Ryan and say, “Change your lifestyle first, and then we can work on your heart.” We know that deep, inner change must come first; “make the tree good, and its fruit [will be] good” (Matthew 12:33). So why don’t we apply the same truth when it comes to discipleship?

When we forget the gospel, we cheat our disciples. We give the impression that being a follower of Jesus means becoming less broken, less sinful, less hopeless. So we create a caste system of Christianity: there are the really broken people (unbelievers), the fairly broken people (young believers), and the people who have learned to pretend they’re not broken (mature believers). Not only is this blatantly unbiblical, it is contrary to common sense. Jesus said that those who are forgiven much will love much (Luke 7:47). Mature Christians are not those who are less broken, but those who realize the depth of their brokenness and cling all the more tightly to Jesus.

THE GOSPEL WORKS FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Gospel-centered discipleship focuses on internal change. We naturally default to external signs of spiritual growth. We do this because it’s easier to measure and track. So we suggest our disciples do more. You can tweak external behavior all day, but to change the desires of the heart, you need the gospel. It fuels change from the inside out. It addresses beliefs and desires, not just actions. A truly deep and biblical belief in the gospel will always result in character change. If change isn’t happening, there’s a heart problem.

This isn’t biblical rocket science; it’s the principle Jesus used. Good trees bear good fruit. When the people asked him how they could do the works of God, he answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29).

But disciples can be good at faking it, and they become convinced that external solutions are what they need. But just disciple a transsexual or two, and you’ll see that Jesus was right. It always comes back to belief.

See, I know that Ryan needs to change his lifestyle. It’s not glorifying to God. And every Christian he’s ever met has taken the lifestyle change approach to discipleship. They’ve pushed him to repent and change his external behavior. But why should he? He doesn’t want to. He wants to be a transsexual. Until he wants not to be a transsexual, nothing else matters. In the same way, until our disciples want to obey Jesus or
pray or reach out to others, nothing else matters.

How do you make someone want to change at this deep level? I don’t really know, but I’m good at trying lots of stuff. So that’s what I did with Ryan. That first meeting had built some trust between us. He trusted that I wasn’t going to hate him or judge him. I began to think and pray about what to do next.

The following week, another student handed me a CD of a lecture she’d heard on homosexuality. It was given by a former homosexual activist who had been radically transformed by Christ. I listened to it, and I thought: maybe this is it. Mike, the guy on the CD, was so refreshingly real. He talked about how much he hated Christians during his gay-activist days, and how it took a strong community of loyal friends to draw him to Jesus. I knew Ryan hated Christians, so I thought he might relate well to what Mike said. I gave the CD to my friend Amy and asked her to pass it along to him thinking it might surface some deeper desires in his soul.

A few days later, Amy called. “Ryan wants to meet with you as soon as possible. He’s listened to the CD three times and he has all sorts of questions.” I knew that could mean any number of things. So, after putting my kids to bed that night, I rolled over to Starbucks. The three of us sat at a small table in the middle of everything. I was extremely self-conscious. We were going to be using the words Jesus and transgender a lot, and that meant every other customer would be trying to eavesdrop on our conversation.

EVERY SIN IS IDOLATRY

Ryan started the dialogue by making it clear that he utterly disagreed with everything on the CD. Mike’s statistics were wrong, he hadn’t done enough research on gay issues, maybe he was never truly gay anyway, and so on. Had I been trying to change Ryan’s behavior, I might have been more apt to defend Mike or to enter into a gay apologetic debate. But none of those things mattered. At this point, I wasn’t trying to convince Ryan that his lifestyle was wrong. I was trying to surface some deeper issues in his heart.

“Okay, so there was lots of stuff that you disagreed with. Did you invite me here to argue about that stuff? Or did you invite me here to talk about some things that you’re really thinking about?” With those few questions, I changed the focus of the conversation.

In discipleship, we can talk about behavior and external circumstances all day, but unless we drag some heart idols out on the table, we’re just putting a Band-Aid on the problem. As Jesus said: “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” Or as Tim Keller says: “The root of every sin is a breaking of the first commandment.” The real question is what god we’re worshiping. That’s why what your disciples want is much more important than what they know.
As we talked, I discerned that Ryan’s dominant heart idol was pride. He wanted power, acceptance, love, control. He found these in his sexual identity. Before he accepted his transsexuality, he said he felt weak, unimportant, secretive. Now, he had an identity. He was socially powerful. When he dressed as a woman, he put others on the defensive. He could judge those who disagreed with his lifestyle as being bigoted, unloving, or intolerant. He was in control.

Our heart idols set the trajectory for everything else. I was beginning to see what Ryan loved and worshiped. I could move the conversation in a direction that would address the disease and not the symptoms.

So how do we solve the problem of idolatry? Simple, turn away from idols and turn to Christ. That is the ultimate goal—repentance and faith. But here’s the problem: we don’t worship idols because we’re ignorant or uninformed or bored. We worship idols because we love them. They are more important to us than life itself. I worship the idol of control because I believe it will give me more than Jesus will. Ryan worships the idol of pride—manifested in transsexual behavior—because it promises to provide what he needs and wants and craves. Sometimes dealing with our idols is not as easy as repent and believe. Sometimes it requires surfacing the deeper wants in our soul that will pull us toward God, if we will only let them.

Ryan began to talk with Amy and me about some things he did agree with. Mike had said that even during his gay years, he always wanted to be “normal”—to have a wife and kids and a house in the suburbs. Ryan desperately identified with that desire. He felt it would never be possible because he was gay and transsexual. But deep down, the desire—the want—was there.

“Where do you think that desire comes from?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Ryan replied.

“Can I offer a possible answer?”

“Sure.”

“Understand that I’m going to talk about this from a biblical point of view, because that’s my world view.”

“Yeah, I know. Go on,” he said.

“I think the fact that you desire to be married and have kids proves that God has implanted certain instincts deeply within your soul. If you were born gay, and if there was no God, it would make no sense for you to desire a wife and kids. The existence of that desire testifies to the fact that you are made in the image of God, like the Bible says, and that sexuality is a deeply wired, God-given part of your identity as a human being. That means that it’s possible for you to change.”
“No it’s not. I don’t want to change. I’m transsexual. I have been ever since I can remember.”

“Then why do you want a wife and kids and a house in the suburbs?” I queried.

“I honestly don’t know.”

“I think there’s more going on there than you’re willing to think about.”

Ryan sat in contemplation for a few moments. “What do you think it would take for me to change?” he questioned.

“I think you have a heart idol called pride that you are worshiping right now. You are your own god. It will take a work of God’s grace to change you. You’ll have to come to the point where you decide that Jesus is trustworthy, and you allow Him to reign in your heart instead of yourself. I realize that’s going to take some time.”

“Bob, let me tell you why I don’t trust Jesus…”

THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

This gospel stuff may seem abstract, but I’m trying to convince you that heart idols and belief are the practical things. When your discipleship efforts to revolve around the gospel, you will see profound change, because the gospel changes everything.

Ryan began to tell me the reasons he didn’t trust Jesus. They all came back to one common denominator: he didn’t trust Christians. He told me how he had been rejected by the students, and even the youth pastor, in a large evangelical youth group because he was small and frail and not manly enough.

But these painful memories paled in comparison to the rejection he felt from his family. His mother and stepfather were both professing Christians. When Ryan had come out and began to live an active transsexual lifestyle, they cut off their support and affirmation. From their point of view, it was a tough love measure, a “love the sinner, hate the sin” sort of approach. But to a sexually broken young man who had been rebuffed by Christians his whole life, it was yet another evidence of Christian hypocrisy. As Ryan spoke about his parents, his whole body seethed with visible rage.

So we talked for a long time about the pervasiveness of sin, and how Christians often fail to live by their own moral standards. And I talked about Jesus a lot, and how Jesus loved to hang out with whores and cheaters and social outcasts. I was trying
to get Ryan to see that he could trust Jesus even though he had a hard time trusting Christians. I reminded him that he trusted Amy and me. And I talked about how he needed to forgive his parents, because otherwise he was only rejecting them the same way they had rejected him.

I was utterly unprepared for what came next. “If I asked you to do something for me, would you do it?” Ryan asked.

Now, when you’re talking to a transsexual, you naturally get a little uncomfortable with that sort of question. But since I had just been preaching to him about trust, I said, “Sure, anything.”

“Would you call my mom and ask her to come here?” Ryan asked.

“Here? You mean Starbucks?”

“No, I mean Omaha. She’s never been here. I’ve asked her to come here again and again, but she won’t. She thinks it would be validating my lifestyle for her to come here. But I just want to see her. I want to talk to her. She doesn’t have to stay with me or anything. I just want her to come visit. She’ll trust you. You can speak her language. She thinks I’m a depraved sex addict. But she’ll listen to you. Bob… I can’t make any progress with God until I work through things with my mom. You’re my friend. Get her to come here.”

I felt time slow down, like a movie scene where the outside action is a blur and all you hear are the thoughts in the main character’s head. “You’re my friend.” I couldn’t escape the magnitude of that statement. There was not a Christian in the world that Ryan trusted except me and Amy. And now he was asking for my help in overcoming the one issue that clouded the gospel more than anything else in his life: his broken relationship with his family. This wasn’t just a step toward the gospel; it was the gospel. Ryan was beginning to want to trust in Jesus. But he would never trust Jesus if he couldn’t forgive his mom. And he would never trust Jesus if he couldn’t trust me.

So I grabbed a napkin and a pen and wrote down his mom’s phone number.

Somewhere along the way, we forget that the gospel doesn’t just change eternal destinies; it changes everything. The gospel transforms societies, renews families, and heals relationships. That’s why Jesus called it “the gospel of the kingdom” (Luke 16:16). The gospel is all about the rule and reign of Jesus. And where Jesus is rightly honored as Lord, there is more than just personal salvation; there is redemptive action.

The gospel is holistic. For me to say that I cared about Ryan’s soul without caring about his relationship with his family would be the pinnacle of hypocrisy. I couldn’t tell Ryan to get saved and then we’ll deal with his family relationships. The real answer for him was that God wants to heal the wounds in your family. He is a redemptive God.

Now ask yourself: how often do you connect your disciples’ life struggles to the gosp
pel? If Ryan were a Christian, we might advise him to read a book on how to honor his father and mother, or we might suggest he do a Bible study on forgiveness. But gospel-centered discipleship asks these questions: How does the gospel need to be expressed in this situation? What heart sin is at the root of the problem? What gospel truth is not being believed or lived out?

This is what distinguishes biblical Christianity from worldly psychology. Any psychologist can say, “Control your anger; forgive each other; treat others with respect.” But what gives us the power to love or to forgive or to respect others? It’s the gospel. And what is it that keeps us from doing these things? It’s our unbelief, our lack of trust in God, our heart idols.

In Ryan’s case, I knew two things: his own idols of control and selfishness were preventing him from loving his parents, and his parents had some heart idols of their own that kept them from really loving Ryan like Jesus would. Getting Ryan’s mom to fly to Omaha was more than a friendly favor; it was gospel-centered redemptive action. It was incarnating the gospel in a real, tangible way. It was what Jesus would do.

So I found myself engaged in the most awkward phone conversation I’ve ever had in my life. “Hi, my name is Bob, and I’m calling from Omaha…"

THE GOSPEL FREES YOU TO RISK

Brennan Manning speaks of having “the courage to accept your acceptance.” When we really believe that God is for us, we don’t fear rejection by friends, family, and peers. We’re no longer living for their approval; we already have God’s approval. It’s what Paul was talking about when he said, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” The gospel is what enables us to love dangerously, the way Jesus did. And dangerous love is what spurs effective evangelism and social justice and community and mission and reconciliation.

Ryan’s parents did come to town a couple of weeks later. It was a great visit. They took the risk of acknowledging their sin and asking Ryan’s forgiveness. And Ryan took the risk of beginning to forgive them. Their visit didn’t solve all the problems or erase all the hurt. But it was a starting point. And Ryan was right: working through things with his parents helped to remove some of his tension toward God.

Until this point, Ryan had set foot in our church only once. It happened to be the night we were discussing biblical manhood and womanhood, which was either a really bad coincidence or a divine comedy. Could there be any topic more awkward for a man who thinks he’s really a woman? What’s worse, we had actually split up into two groups that night—men and women. Ryan had come up to me, grinning, and asked which group I wanted him to go to. I was certain he’d never be back. But on the weekend of his parents’ visit, they all showed up to our worship service together.

A few weeks later, Ryan and I went out for a steak dinner at one of the finest restaurants in town. It was his way of thanking me for setting up his parents’ visit. As
I enjoyed my prime rib, Ryan got intensely serious. “Bob, I’ve got some deep secrets that I’ve never told anyone, and I think it’s time I get them out. You’re the only person I trust with stuff like this. If I tell you about them, will you promise to keep them confidential?”

I could tell from Ryan’s face that this was no joke. He was deadly pale. So I tried to lighten the moment. “Ryan, sure, man. You know I’ll always honor your trust. But if you have dead bodies buried in your backyard or something, I’ll have to call the police.” He didn’t laugh. I choked on my steak a little bit and tried to pretend it was no big deal.

“I’m not going to talk about it here. I’ll come in to your office tomorrow.”

The following day, Ryan opened a window into his past that had not been opened before. Thankfully, it didn’t involve dead bodies, and I didn’t have to call the police. But it was deeply serious to him, and getting it out in the open lifted a crushing weight from his soul. As I sat in my office after his departure, I wondered: what made him feel willing to talk about painful secrets from his past? The answer, of course, is that the gospel had freed him to risk. I had spent months saturating every conversation with Ryan in the truth of the gospel. And he was beginning to actually believe the depth of his own brokenness and the power of God’s grace. He didn’t have to hide anymore.

Ryan hasn’t trusted in Jesus yet. But I dare say he knows the gospel better than many Christians. He knows he’s a broken person, but not any more broken than the guy next door. He knows that the idols of selfishness and control dominate the landscape of his heart. He knows that Jesus can change everything, including his own desires, if he’ll humble himself and surrender. And he knows that being a disciple of Jesus isn’t about just getting out of hell or being sexually healthy. It’s about the pursuit of a redemptive God who offers a whole new kind of life.

The gospel doesn’t just make you right with God; it frees you to delight in God. So saturate your discipleship in the gospel. Because you’re a sinner and so are your disciples. And Jesus is your only hope.
Hey!

Sorry, best postcard I could find. We've spent the afternoon in the world's filthiest truck stop. I wouldn't go into the bathroom for fear of accidentally touching something. What I wouldn't do for a nice, warm shower, and a clean bed to sleep in. —Sam

1979 Park Avenue
Winter Park, FL
32789
Let's start with a story. Rocky is “the man.” You’ve met few students like him. He has great potential as a student leader. He is truly seeking to grow in his faith and has a strong desire to influence others. He is socially adept and well liked. This kind of key leader only comes along once every few years.

Despite his leadership capabilities, Rocky has one seemingly minor problem. It’s really a bad habit that he can’t shake--Rocky is addicted to Charms Blow-Pops. While it started as a harmless pleasure, his habit is starting to extract a toll on his life. The cost of eating two-dozen Blow-Pops a day is adding up. A trip to the dentist reveals six cavities, which are not only painful, but expensive. Physically, his once chiseled frame is turning sloshy.

What is more alarming is how his habit is beginning to affect his relationships. His roommates are getting increasingly annoyed at finding used Blow-Pop sticks all over their room. Every time Rocky tries to quit he gets irritable and angry. His friends notice that he is spending more and more time alone.

Things hit rock bottom when Rocky is caught rummaging through his roommate’s Green Bay Packer piggy bank looking for change to support his fix. Humiliated, deflated and disillusioned Rocky comes to you for help. He relates to you that he’s been keenly aware that his habit has become a real problem but he’s been too embarrassed to talk about it with anyone. He says he’s asked the Lord countless times to remove his compulsion, tried to memorize Scripture and even promised God he would completely swear off his sweet sensations. But while he might get a few days of freedom, nothing he’s tried has brought lasting change.

David prayed, “Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me” (Psalm 19:13). Unfortunately, this tongue-and-cheek story about Rocky illustrates an all too real experience for sincere believers. Like Rocky, many seeking Christ are frustrated, disillusioned and perilously close to despair because they are lumped up by habitual sins “that rule over them.” And often these areas are kept hidden because of the fear of judgment and rejection.

Let’s step back and use Rocky’s experience as an example. Rocky’s got a problem. In this case, his Blow-Pops represent an area of a person’s life where one has lost control and feels a sense of powerlessness, defeat or unmanageability. Hebrews 12:1-2
offers us some insight here. In light of the great cloud of witnesses and those who have demonstrated exemplary faith in the past, the author exhorts his readers to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”

Let's look at one's Blow-Pops through this grid. Sometimes a person's Blow-Pop is an obvious manifestation of sin (the sin that so easily entangles)—lust, using pornography, alcohol and drug abuse, fits of rage, lying, gossiping. Other times it's a little less obvious (that which hinders)—dependency relationships, addiction to work or academic success, use of movies, video games, or soaps, food addiction, sports, online chatting, etc.

Regardless of the form of the destructiveness, several common characteristics are often true of people struggling with habitual sin. First, there is a sincere desire to stop but an inability to do so despite their best efforts. They feel trapped in the behavior. Think about it in terms of addiction: they are powerless to stop the controlling behavior.

Second, the sin and extent of the destructiveness of the behavior remains in the dark. Consequently they experiences tremendous shame and guilt. It begins to define their walk with Christ and becomes THE ISSUE of their lives.

Third, there may be a Jekyll and Hyde quality to their lives. When the behavior and sin pattern kicks in, they become someone else. In addition, they may do really well in achieving victory and then have a sudden slip or relapse seemingly out of nowhere.

Fourth, the behavior almost always isolates people from true relationship. And, both the cause and the solution of the behavior has, at its root, a relational component. Thus the solution has to focus on the relational and not just the moral. But, more about that later.

Finally, acting out the habitual sin has an idolatrous dynamic to it. Whatever they use in seeking to get their needs met is taking the place of God in their lives.

Yet, in the midst of the mess and heartache flowing from this failure there is hope for change—not just in the way one behaves, but deep, lasting heart change. Let's look at a fresh view of habitual sin. To be sure, God has a holy hatred for sin and is never responsible for directly tempting anyone (James 1:13). However, isn't it just like the Lord to use Satan's insidious schemes as an actual opportunity for His outlandish grace and power to be displayed? As disciple makers, we have precious few windows into the hearts of people. Our Blow-Pops represent one window God can use for His glory as it relates to long-term heart and character change.

The following are some principles for us to apply as God makes a way for us to move into people’s lives and join them on their journey. For these principles to work, it is assumed that the person in view here—the grower—has a desire to change. Many aren’t convinced that what they are doing is sin or that their seemingly innocent habit is becoming a destructive force in their lives. We can love those folks, be available to them, share our own story with them, but God needs to work in their heart before they are ready to do the hard work necessary to truly change. There is a saying in Alcoholics Anonymous that fits here: “Half measures availed us nothing.”

However, in this context, we’re talking about people who truly want to change.
They are sick and tired of being strangled and suffocated by habitual sin. They have tried to be free but have not found lasting answers. It is to these people we have the privilege of offering hope.

ADDRESS SINFUL BEHAVIOR BUT KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BIG PICTURE—RELATIONSHIP

First, by way of perspective, habitual sin needs to be addressed. But, the behavior itself isn’t the main issue. In other words, the struggle this person faces is not primarily moral but relational. As John Ortberg has stated, ultimately, we are to be growing in love for God and others. This is the essence of maturity and godliness, not whether we “acted out” last week. The behavior is important, not because it is a moral failure but because it hinders and even cuts off relating with God and others in holy and intimate ways. And, as Henry Cloud relates, the behavior must be dealt with otherwise there is no hope of getting to the deeper issues of relational sin and need that will lead to more lasting and profound heart change.

HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

Recognizing that one needs to keep relationship primary, the person also must have a strategy to deal with the behavior. Successful plans for lasting change always include these actions:

- Come into the light with God and others (1 John 1, James 5:16).

- Understand that we’re powerless and weak and have no chance to overcome our habitual sin if left to our own devices and strength (John 15:5, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Matthew 5:3-4).

- Community—going beyond accountability. More on that below.

- Acceptance and direction (synonymous with grace and truth).

- Addressing issues of the heart and not just of behavior.

- Renewing of the mind, which includes submission to Scripture, worship, and experience of love from God and from others. When we read in Romans 12:2 that we are to “be transformed by the renewing of (our) mind,” it is easy to focus on memorizing and meditating on Scripture so that our minds might be made new. This is undoubt-
edly important. But ask yourself: “In what ways has God renewed my mind?” For most it is through a myriad of means—Scripture, worship, prayer, service, and through the love, acceptance and honesty of others. Apply these principles to the discipleship relationship and as it relates to helping students see freedom from habitual sin.

These ideas are clearly not exhaustive. In fact there may be some issues beyond your training and experience to handle. That’s okay. One of the things that’s important for you to become familiar with is the other resources for growth available in your geographic area—pastoral, counseling and support groups.

THE BATTLE IS WON ONE DAY AT A TIME

Emphasize the one-day-at-time nature of the struggle. And, avoid calling students to dramatic one-time commitments. It is unwise and unrealistic to encourage them to commit to such things as purity (whatever that is) or not masturbating ever again (or this month). Most of the time people who sincerely want to walk with Christ have made countless commitments in areas of habitual sin. These can often be counter productive in that they ultimately lead to disillusionment and despair. A more effective approach is to help students take things one day at a time. This is a biblical concept. Remember God’s provision of manna for the Israelites on a daily basis? (See also Matthew 6:11; Hebrews 3:7; 4:7). This perspective also highlights the relational nature of growth. We invite God into our daily struggles and temptations and receive moment by moment His gracious power and presence. Rather than thinking in terms of victory, think of it as a process of growth and change and the benefits of the journey.

YOU’RE NOT ALONE

Encourage students that they aren’t alone. So many think they are the only ones who struggle. Do you know of some mature students who are honest with their struggles and are walking in the light? Give them a platform and access to others. This is a huge opportunity to bring students into light and relationship and out of isolation.

Think about ways you can connect students with one another, especially in small groups. Existing Bible studies are an excellent place to start. One reason 12-step recovery groups are successful is the fellowship shared over a common experience and brokenness. Thus, the meetings and group members become a major component God uses to break people of destructive habits and set them on a course of developing more mature and healthy relationships.

Let’s talk about a specific Blow-Pop at this point. With the explosion of the Internet, more and more young people, both men and women, are finding themselves caught in
the snare of pornography. This stronghold is incredibly powerful and will affect more and more of our culture as time goes on. There are an increasing number of resources to help people ensnared by sexual sin and addiction. For group and campus settings, two excellent resources are the companion books written by Rick James called *Flesh* (for men) and *Fantasy* (for women). They are available through New Life Resources and will help move students out of isolation and into community with one another.

**LEAD FROM WEAKNESS**

This principle goes far deeper then simply how you lead others. Perhaps the heading should read “Live from Weakness.” Some reflective questions at this point are in order:

Am I living in “the light” myself (1 John 1)? Am I embracing my own weakness and brokenness so God’s power might rest on me (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)? Am I embracing the fact that apart from Christ I can do nothing (John 15:5)? Am I appropriately opening up my life and my heart in my daily experience with others? Thus when it comes to leading others I am simply living out who I am. Ultimately it’s not an issue of thinking about how I can get others to share their “uglies” with me but rather a natural dynamic borne out of a lifestyle of authenticity.

Obviously there is need for some Spirit-directed discretion here. It is inappropriate for us to share things that would unduly damage a relationship or compromise other relationships in which we are involved. I’ll trust you’ll be able to make those distinctions as the Spirit directs and guides.

However, as we practice authentic living, God will naturally give insight into how to enter into another’s life. Then, we simply take advantage of opportunities to go deeper. Practically, it means looking for ways to empathize with our disciples and how they are feeling. Over time, you earn the right to enter in.

**BEYOND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Elements of what we commonly refer to as accountability are helpful in dealing with habitual sin. Accountability offers us the opportunity to come into the light and confess our sins to others. However, accountability groups or partners can take on the component of simply becoming a “tracking device” for sinful and destructive behavior. They can easily focus on the negative—avoiding certain behavior—and not on the positive of moving out of isolation and into authentic, real relationships. Accountability relationships can become somewhat artificial in nature. We might come to the group meeting, confess our sins, and yes be accepted, but there might be little interaction or connection outside of the meeting itself.

Perhaps a new paradigm is needed here. Ask yourself some tough questions: Am I willing “to do life” with this person(s)? That means understanding their dreams,
passions, and calling. Am I willing to speak the truth and hear the truth from these people? Am I willing to call them in the heat of the moment and not just give a report after the fact? Am I willing to explore how my emotions often drive my behavior and what I think about God and others? Who is God calling them to be? Am I willing to walk the journey of life together? Is my heart changing? Am I growing in my desire and ability to love God and others? And, of course we need to help the people we are working with ask these same questions. This might be setting the bar high, but, again, we need to think relationally not just morally.

Finally, never give up when it comes to seeking grace/truth relationships. There may be a few false starts in developing intimate connections that will last. Sometimes group members don’t mesh well. Sometimes people start strong but lose focus and commitment to the group. People graduate or move away. We need to convince others, and convince ourselves that it’s worth the risk, and the blood, sweat and tears. As a wise campus director once said to me, “Even if the group doesn’t work, you can still grow because you’ve trusted the Lord in stepping out of isolation and toward relationship with others.”

MAKE CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING BIBLICAL MODELS OF GROWTH

Before offering a specific application let’s look at how we view growth within Campus Crusade for Christ. We emphasize many facets of a person’s growth strategy—the importance of God’s Word, prayer, God’s love and forgiveness, and worship. But, two models are at the forefront when it comes to what it means to walk with Christ and grow in our faith: the Spirit-filled life and what’s been labeled as the Growth Model.

Here is a brief sketch of what these mean. First, the foundational principles of the Spirit-filled life are:

- God has given His Spirit so that we can enjoy intimacy with Him and enjoy all He has for us (John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:12).

- The believer is incapable of living the Christian life in his own strength (John 15:5). To attempt to do so leads to an inability to experience the power and presence of God on a moment-by-moment basis and an inability to consistently overcome sin and temptation (Romans 7:14-25; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 5:16-21).

- The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).

- By faith we invite the Holy Spirit to control us thus experiencing God’s presence and power moment-by moment (Romans 8:1-17; Ephesians 5:18-20; Galatians 5:22-23).
Second, in recent years we have begun to talk about heart change and character
development in terms of the “Growth Model.” While there are many facets to the
Growth Model, its basic principles include the recognition that a person grows best
in an environment of grace and truth over time (John 1:14). Thus, in our struggle we
desperately need grace (acceptance) and we desperately need truth (direction). And
we need to see heart and character change as a long-term journey, not an overnight
fix. Our model for growth places a heavy emphasis on moving out of isolation and into
relationship with others.

Now, let’s make some connections between our discussion about our Blow-Pops
and these two models for growth. The Spirit-filled life is the essence of admitting our
powerlessness before God and our need to surrender to Him moment by moment.
Consider a model from the world of addiction recovery. First, notice the first three
steps of Alcoholics Anonymous adapted for our purposes:

- Admitted we were powerless over our Blow-Pop(s) and that our lives
  had become unmanageable.

- Came to believe that God could restore us to sanity.

- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of
  God...

Compare these steps to John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who
abides in me and I in Him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”
The two key words that a person hears upon entering the “Program” are that they are
powerless (“apart from me you can do nothing”) and that they need to surrender (“abide
in me”) to God on a moment-by-moment basis. Isn’t this the essence of what it means
to walk in the Spirit? In order for people to see behavioral change as it relates to their
Blow-Pops, they need to embrace that they are utterly powerless to change on their
own. God must be invited into each temptation in order for the behavior to change
over time and the heart and mind to be renewed.

Admitting powerlessness actually becomes a blessing for it is the only way for God's
power to be manifested in a person's life. Recall Paul's boast in 2 Corinthians 12: “He
said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.’
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses … so that Christ's
power may rest on me.”

Second, as mentioned above, the Growth Model emphasizes the relational dy-
amic that must be present for a person to grow and change. In AA participants are
told that their only hope for recovery and healing is to attend a lot of meetings, make a
lot of phone calls to other members, and get immersed in “The Fellowship.” Develop-
ing relationships with other recovering people is essential to putting aside the “drug”
(our Blow-Pops).

One of the most powerful dynamics of a healthy recovery group is the recognition
that there is a level playing field. It doesn’t make a bit of difference whether one enters
the door of a meeting as a CEO of a Fortune 500 company or as an ex-con recently released from the local penitentiary. There is a connection between participants that everyone is powerless and our lives are a mess because of the addiction. There is a tremendous amount of acceptance based on a common struggle.

A person also receives truth, or direction, in two forms. First, there is honesty that flows from truth. If we hope to recover, we must be brutally honest about our Blow-Pop and our “sin history.” In AA, people are told upon entering the Program that their chances of recovery are good if they are willing to be brutally honest about their addictive behavior and their sinful attitudes. Second, people receive the truth by “working the Program.” They must work through each of the 12 steps with a sponsor (loosely compared to a discipler) who can help them navigate what it means to recover and learn to live in a healthy and mature lifestyle. They do not get coddled and told they are okay but they are presented with a strategy and the tools to grow and mature.

The goal of making comparisons to AA is not to convince you to start a 12-step group, but rather to show how a relatively successful program of recovery actually mirrors in many ways biblical principles such as walking in the Spirit and moving into relationships of grace and truth. We need to show how to apply the Spirit filled life and the Growth Model directly to a person’s Blow-Pops.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

In closing, let’s look at how you can take at least one practical step toward leading your group out of isolation and into relationship. First, read Rocky’s story together, either in a small group or one-on-one. Feel free to embellish and edit it as needed. Then, take some time to think through some questions to help students break the ice and begin living in the light. Here are just a few suggestions:

• How would you counsel Rocky?

• What is he doing right?

• In what ways might his thinking and strategy for change be wrong?

• Can you relate to Rocky’s struggle?

• Would you be willing to take the risk of coming into the light with at least one of your Blow-Pops?

• What’s the most challenging thing about your struggle?

• What’s the most frustrating thing about your struggle?
• How does it feel to share about your Blow-Pop?

• What one step can you take to move toward freedom and growth in this area?

At the conclusion of your discussion suggest an exercise. Give them each a Blow-Pop. Invite them to put the Blow-Pop in a conspicuous spot—next to the computer, night stand, bathroom sink. Suggest that each time they look at the Blow-Pop it would serve as an opportunity to quickly express their powerlessness to God over their named Blow-Pop and offer a brief prayer of surrender. In the morning when they look at the Blow-Pop, have it be a reminder to ask the Lord to help overcome sin and temptation just for that day.

Most importantly suggest to them how the Blow-Pop is not a reminder of their sin but an invitation into relationship. First, let it serve as a reminder that as they are tempted throughout today they can invite God into the temptation and into relationship with them. Second, the Blow-Pop can serve as a reminder to move into relationship with others who are walking the journey with them.

As we share the gospel, we will be most effective when we experience the reality of the gospel ourselves. What a privilege to help students embrace the gospel’s power in areas where they’ve felt the greatest failure. What profound evidence of God’s power being manifested in weakness and in the most unlikely “places.”
Hey.

We’re exhausted. I drop into bed thinking I’ll never be able to pull myself up in the morning. That said, it’s been incredibly rewarding. I’m so glad we came, and they are very appreciative of all we’ve tried to do. Must get to bed; it’s after 12.

— Sam

1939 Park Avenue
Winter Park, FL 32789
As legend has it, Apple Computers was started in the 70s by two guys in a garage—Steve Woz and Steve Jobs. Woz was the technical genius, Jobs was the visionary. Jobs had a vision of literally changing the world with what he considered “insanely great” computers. He had a passion for the Macintosh.

In fact there’s a story told about how Jobs got the president of Pepsi Corporation to leave his prestigious, secure, and well-paying job to come work for his upstart company. He gave the president his pitch told, and told him of the need. But the Pepsi executive wasn’t willing to leave behind his future of power, prestige and money. Not willing to accept a “no,” Jobs looked at him and said, “Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water, or do you want a chance to change the world?” With that question ringing in his ears, John Sculley left Pepsi, and came to work for Apple.

One responsibility of a discipler is to be a fork in the road for young followers of Christ. That fork is a “biblical challenge.” It is a well-executed, carefully worded, non-manipulative, visionary, confrontation with the truth, like the one given by Steve Jobs.

The difference between an invitation and a challenge is a small but significant one. An invitation says, “Come if you want,” “Come if you can” or “Come if you have nothing better to do.” The problem is that disciples don’t want to do many things that would benefit their spiritual growth; they are as initially reluctant as John Sculley. The other problem is that they can’t: at least in their minds they simply don’t have the time. The reality is, of course, they can, but it would require the reordering of their priorities.

A challenge, therefore, goes beyond invitation. It contains a compelling vision of why this course is the right one, why passivity or neutrality on the issue is unacceptable, and compels a commitment. Reread the challenge of Steve Jobs to John Sculley and you’ll see all of these elements, you will also note that he said “no” to a simple invitation.

Why we choose to invite instead of challenge is quite simple. A strong challenge can strain a relationship, puts us in an uncomfortable authoritative role, and risks that
our disciple will take a step back rather than forward. On the positive side, that sounds a whole lot like the way Jesus dealt with His disciples.

The bottom line need to challenge disciples is that they will not respond to an invitation to do many things that will be to their spiritual benefit (I certainly didn’t). In campus ministry, there are a small handful of opportunities for growth that will often require such a challenge.

THE CHALLENGE TO SMALL GROUPS

It would be nice if all disciples saw their need to be involved in community and upon conversion committed to join a Bible study and bring refreshments to the Weekly Meeting. But this side of the Second Coming that ain’t gonna happen, so to invite them to a Bible study is like inviting them to join a book club—“Sure sounds like fun. How about if I meet you there?” Why should they bother, they have no idea what this thing will be like, and they have a spiritual counselor who makes a house call once a week.

What they need is to be challenged. The first aspect of a challenge is a compelling spiritual passage. The passage should demonstrate the need to take steps of obedience in order to grow. I have often used the Parable of the Sower. Parables with questions work better than the bluntness of a single verse, “What this verse says is you should go to my Bible Study.”

Next, communicate why you think they need to be involved in a small group. This would include the spiritual benefits to them as well the biblical reasons why this needs to be a priority. Take time to go through some verses. Share your own story of how being in a small group changed your life. Paint a passionate picture. Honestly, if they don’t get plugged into a community of believers, things do not bode well for their spiritual future. Our faith was designed to be lived out in community and you break that design principle at your own peril.

Challenges should not be open ended or vague, but must contain a specific commitment: this group will meet for seven weeks and will last for ninety minutes. When you give time parameters, the ones you challenge have the opportunity to count the cost and the limited duration makes it feel less like their opting into Social Security. It also shows what your expectations are: a challenge for seven weeks means you expect them to attend your small group for seven weeks. So include the itemized receipt to let them know the exact costs.

Challenges always end by asking for a decision—“So, who’s with me!” This is the hard part because you become the fork in the road: they must say yes or no. You have taken away the option of neutrality by drawing a line just in front of their toes and asking them to either step over it or away from it. The gamble is that they will step back, the alternative is to perpetually invite them to something they will never know the benefit of until they actually get involved.

Finally, put your challenges on paper. Paper makes everything more real, which is why people have business cards even when they don’t have a business. It makes the
challenge more tangible and carries the appearance that you’re not simply making this stuff up—it must be real, it’s on paper. It also provides you with something to refer back to should they not follow through on their commitment.

CHALLENGES TO LEADERSHIP

“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined” (Titus 1:7-8).

The challenge to leadership contains the basic ingredients as the Bible study challenge but with a few additions. First, stress the spiritual requirements, as exemplified by Paul’s Pastoral Epistles. The issues faced by Titus “pursuing dishonest gain” might not be something to specify but be very clear what those requirements are: “The role of leadership requires that you are having a daily quiet time, involved in a small group, taking out the garbage, wearing deodorant, etc.” Even if they decline the leadership role they should feel honored that they were asked. It’s hard to find a place where Jesus bent the requirements of discipleship to accommodate hesitance—“OK, you don’t have to sell everything, but at least get rid of the major appliances.”

Communicate the commitment and expectations: “We will meet once a month without exception.” Because so much happens at conferences, it is crucial that you include in the requirements for leadership, attendance at major conferences. Perhaps an allowance for one truancy a year, but any more than that will compromise your leadership structure.

And throughout any challenge, communicate the heart behind the request or requirement: “The church would look quite differently if Jesus was never able to gather the twelve together in the same time and place” or “People will be sharing their heart, joys, and even sin, so you could imagine how it might feel in that environment if some weeks you showed up and others you didn’t.”

CHALLENGES TO CONFERENCES

Does going to a conference make someone a better Christian, or not going mean they are not walking with God? Obviously not, but it is one of the few places on the planet where one experiences true biblical community and where community is created. Community to a Christian is as water to a plant: it is that important. Therefore sewing your disciple into a community of committed Christians is perhaps the greatest way you will ever serve them. A challenge is the way this service is executed, because until
you’ve been to a conference it will always sound like the waste of a perfectly good weekend. Your spiritual child needs to eat green beans and simply offering them on the menu is not going to get the job done.

A challenge to a conference focuses on two things: the benefits of going and addressing the obstacles to not being able to come. First, go through the many benefits of being at the conference using God-inspired overstatement where possible: “It’s like putting your spiritual life on steroids.” Next, ask the question: “What would be some of the potential barriers for you attending this conference?” Write them down as they speak and address each one. If it’s money, offer a scholarship; if it’s an upcoming test, go with them to the dumpster and help them rummage for the discarded answer key (It’s just a joke).

If all of this has been to no avail, I would be quite pointed: “I’ll be honest with you. I really feel that this is the next step for you spiritually. You’ve hit a ceiling to how much you can grow on your own. Would you be willing to pray about it and honestly tell God you are willing to do whatever He shows you?” There is a point when you can press too far, especially for someone new to the ministry. But if you have been involved in a discipleship relationship for a year or more, and they still remain on the periphery of community, you must take a further step and become not only a fork in the road but a fork, spoon and knife.

SUMMER PROJECTS

Perhaps your persuasive skills and empowerment by the Spirit far exceed mine, but to challenge someone to give an entire summer of their lives is difficult. I’ve found it better to challenge them to a retreat and have them learn about summer projects through a promotion at the retreat before I ever address the issue. It can also be helpful to inform them of a summer project that aligns with a known area of interest: perhaps an inner city project, or hiking in Yellowstone. I generally sit down to challenge someone to a summer project if I have leverage for doing so: if a person has articulated a desire to do full-time ministry, or holds a leadership role in the ministry.

If they have been considering full-time ministry, it is only logical that they give it a try for a summer. They will never have the opportunity again, unless they’re fired from a job, to devote an entire summer to ministry. It is wise stewardship on their part to invest a summer before investing their lives. If they can’t carve out a summer for ministry, it’s unlikely they will have the tenacity to leave their life and career trajectory at some future point to abruptly enter the ministry. People take progressive steps of faith and obedience, not leaps, though our minds like to rationalize to the contrary.

I also challenge students to a summer project if they have significant leadership in the ministry. I come to them as a co-laborer asking them to consider the additional training they would receive. The reality is, which I am choosing to communicate, is that they are critical to the ministry and an increase in their training would be an enormous boost to the ministry.
Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Pastors serving Christ under communism, church planters in South America, evangelists in Asia, missionaries to the Muslim world. Trace back the spiritual journey of today’s most influential Christian leaders and you’ll find that most of them came from a campus ministry. They were involved in a campus movement just like the one you’re in (perhaps from your campus), which led them to a vocational choice of full-time ministry.

Which leads to an important question: Where will the next generation of Christian workers, pastors, and missionaries come from? From the college ministries of Campus Crusade for Christ and other Christian groups in the United States and around the world. From these campuses will come the generation of laborers who will help see the Great Commission fulfilled.

For this reason our role in raising up Christian workers is arguably the most influential in all of Christian ministry. Many Campus Crusade staff desiring to serve internationally have remained on U.S. campuses knowing that every year they remain they will multiply themselves many times over in laborers for the spiritual harvest.

Consider Roger Hershey, the former campus director of Miami of Ohio. On his wall is a map with more than 500 pins placed in locations all over the world. These pins represent the students that have been involved in his campus ministry and now serve as pastors and missionaries around the globe. In raising up these laborers, Roger’s ministry and influence now extends to the hundreds of ministries begun by his disciples and hundreds of thousands reached with the gospel, making Roger’s impact for Christ beyond calculation. Can you think of another church or ministry that sees this degree of influence for expanding the kingdom of God?

This is just the spiritual reality: the most committed and best trained students reside in our campus movements. If God is going to call people into the harvest, we should expect that it will be from among our ministries. It certainly has been historically.

For this reason, Campus Crusade as a ministry does its fair share of recruiting because even the “called” need a little push out the door (I know of what I speak). But in so doing your disciples can feel like they are perpetually being recruited to ministry or Campus Crusade staff. On the positive side, if your disciple has gone to enough events they’ve already heard a challenge to full-time ministry. This takes some of the pressure off of you—they’ve heard, and the Holy Spirit is at work.

But you are their spiritual parent and how and when you challenge them (provided you believe they are qualified), will be a significant event.

In light of people’s sensitivity to pressure, and the recruiting environment of Campus Crusade, I seek to have one, and only one, conversation on the matter—unless they bring it up at another time—and I am very sensitive as to when that conversation should take place.
A student I discipled once told me, “I feel like I am always being challenged to join staff.”

I asked, “When have I ever mentioned joining staff to you?”

He had to say, “You haven’t.”

In our Campus Crusade environment, I have deemed that one strong challenge is more powerful than many challenges, and my challenge is usually to join the staff of Campus Crusade (unless it has become clear in our relationship that they have a calling elsewhere). The reason is disciples only need to be challenged when obedience requires a nudge, and without such a nudge obedience seems unlikely. Other vocational ministry options, including seminary or a pastorate, particularly because they do not require raising support, do not require a nudge. On the other hand, a willingness to join staff with Campus Crusade and raise support, will also make them available to God for any possible missionary post or organization to which they might be led.

Some of what I share with a disciple is written above. If God is at work in their life, little of what I say will be new, but what I focus on, are the sticking points: their reasoning and obstacles.

I pray as they speak asking God to show me if there is any layer of rationalizing in their thinking process. The bottom line is that those feeling they should enter the ministry will usually not deny the fact, but will struggle with postponing the event: I need to work for a few years, pay off debt, live at home and be a witness to my parents for a year, get my masters, get married, go to seminary, etc. Sometimes the reasons are legitimate, many times they are not.

It is only when you’ve been in ministry for many a few years, that you realize you’ve met few people who didn’t need to so something first, which makes you more discerning to what appears on the surface to be legitimate reservations. As they speak you begin to hear Luke 9 rattle around in your mind:

He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59-62).

God will give you wisdom on how to gently uncover some of the sticking points, but it is not your responsibility to convince them. It is your responsibility, with wisdom from the Spirit, to unveil hidden fears and motives as to where and why they might be delaying obedience; to tell them what you honestly think of their plan, to challenge thoughts and assumptions that are clearly not true or biblical, and to call them to pray about certain issues with a willingness to do whatever God reveals to them. To be the
best detective, you too must be open to whatever God is saying even if it means they should not go into ministry.

Obstacles are more fun to discuss. They are not rationalizations, but legitimate barriers to which God will provide solutions if your disciples seek to do God's will and He is calling them into ministry. These obstacles include: parental approval, debt, or perhaps even sin issues.

Some of the answers and encouragements to these obstacles can be found on the Decisions CD, which contains a huge amount of resources for helping a person work through a vocational choice. You can give the CD to your disciples, challenging them to process the information. Many questions are discussed on the CD: What are my gifts? Why campus ministry? What would I learn at seminary? What do I do with personal debt? You can order the Decisions CD at www.wsnpress.com.

You can also find some useful resources on addressing obstacles at campuscrusadeforchrist.com and click on “Joining Staff.” The section “commonly asked questions” has some great information.

Between the Campus Crusade missionary environment, a thoughtful challenge from you, and the Decisions CD, your disciples will have the nudge they need to respond to God's calling. The result is between them and God.

SUMMARY

As a parent, I’ve experienced many times when my children simply will not choose to do what’s best for them. The beauty of being a parent is I possess the leverage of discipline to accomplish their greater good. As a discipler we do not. What we have is a challenge, which moves up the proximity of truth and takes away the position of neutrality. It is the wise use and application of a biblical challenge that really makes the difference between a good and great discipler.

This is a sample of a challenge sheet.

- **MARK 4 “PARABLE OF SOWER”**
  - Why is wealth deceitful?
  - How have you felt the busyness of life?
  - What does it mean to bear fruit?
  - Which soil are you? Which would you like to be?

- **PURPOSE OF A LEADERSHIP GROUP**
  - Learn how to effectively lead a small group (Mark 3:14).
  - Grow in spiritual leadership (1 Timothy 3:1).
  - Learn how to better disciple others (2 Timothy 2:2).
  - Build biblical community (Philippians 2:3-4).
  - Encouragement and spiritual accountability (James 5:16).
• BENEFITS OF A LEADERSHIP GROUP •
• Personal character development and leadership development (Galatians 5:22-23).
• Training in ministry (Colossians 4:17).
• Deep Christian friendships (1 Thessalonians 2:7-10).
• Opportunity to trust God in greater ways (Hebrews 11:6).
• Cultivate a deeper walk with Christ (Psalm 42:1).

• QUALIFICATIONS •
• Heart that is actively seeking to know Christ more intimately.
• A desire to be taught and learn from others.
• Consistent personal evangelism.
• Development of a Bible Study that you would lead.
• Commitment to at least one conference per semester.
• Weekly time commitment for semester: 6.5 hrs.
• Leadership meeting (2.0 hrs.) Weekly meeting (1.5 hrs.)
• Leading Bible study (2.0 hrs.) Discipleship time (1.0 hrs.)

• CHALLENGE •
• Do you want to be in a leadership group?
• Read Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, Deuteronomy 23:21-23.
• Are you willing to commit yourself faithfully to these qualifications?
World Poverty

WSN, and a brief history of the world

There is a starving world and yet every day I scrape mounds of food off my plate and into a bloated garbage bag. The problem isn’t a lack of compassion and certainly not a lack of food. It is an issue of feasibility; I have no simple way to ship my plate of food overseas and no clue of where I would send it—“Third World Poor Box 3700.” This has also been the struggle of world missions: the need for a feasible plan or strategy to bring the gospel to every nation. The campus ministry and its missions strategy really does provide a compelling solution, but that does us little good if we ourselves don’t fully understand it, and the majority of us don’t.

My chief concern is to help our disciples become world Christians. World Christians are followers of Christ who have taken personal ownership of the Great Commission and who share Christ’s heart to see all nations receive the gospel. The most compelling element in creating vision for world evangelization is the feasibility to pull it off. When our disciples understand that this is possible, then they are more likely to engage in the mission. What follows is a brief history of campus missions, where we are today, and where we may soon be headed. While history is only interesting to a select few, you really do need to know this and if it helps start you in a history mood here are a few random dates to memorize: 1923, 1847, 536, 1941, 1742, 1812, 1963, and please don’t forget 1492.

THE HISTORY OF CAMPUS MISSIONS

The history of campus missions began at universities in places such as Wittenberg, Zurich, and Geneva. At these places, the first missionaries received their training, motivation, and marching orders. These movements gave rise to the Reformation. The impetus of the university system in America was the pedagogy of missionaries and pastors. (The curriculum to ridicule them being a later development. But for the sake of time and space we will fast forward to the last century or so.)
In 1886 the first Christian conference for college students was held in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. On Friday evening, the last day of the conference, 250 students were given a challenge by Robert Wilder to consider taking the gospel to the world as foreign missionaries. One by one, coming forward to except the challenge, were 100 students from schools such as Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, and Cornell. As a symbol of their commitment, each student signed a pledge, which read:

“We the undersigned, declare ourselves willing and desirous, God permitting, to go to the unevangelized portions of the world.”

Seeing God’s hand at work, Wilder spent the next year feverishly traveling to more than 150 campuses giving the same challenge, and seeing an additional 2,100 students sign the pledge. For more than 50 years, missionaries would pour out from the Student Volunteer Movement to the far corners of the earth—a total of 20,500 missionaries, the greatest missionary foray in the history of the church.

In 1948 the Student Volunteer Movement splintered. Most of the movement began to focus its attention on social issues. But those still with a heart for evangelism, joined with a newly formed college ministry and held their first missions conference in Urbana, Illinois. That group was InterVarsity.

In his book *Revive Us Again*, author Joel Carpenter notes that after World War II the call to fulfill the Great Commission once again ran into a slump in this country. It was at the point of its lowest ebb that this first InterVarsity conference was held. Of the 526 in attendance, 300 made decisions to go into full-time Christian ministry. InterVarsity was soon joined by Campus Crusade for Christ and other campus ministries and a new missionary enterprise springing from the campus and flowing out to the world was once again underway.

**THE STRATEGY BEHIND CAMPUS MISSIONS**

As best as I can tell, no one sat down and thought up the strategy of fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching the college campus. Campus ministry is more the result of the observation that God has chosen to use college students as His vehicle to accelerate the evangelism of the world. Reaching the college campus is His strategy to help fulfill the Great Commission.

When you think about why God might have chosen to have spiritual revival and world missions emanate from the university, you begin to realize what a profound strategy it is. Consider the following questions.

**WHEN IS A PERSON MOST SPIRITUALLY OPEN TO THE GOSPEL?**

Before a person leaves college, his worldview and trajectory in life will be set, and it is not easily altered. There is a unique window of time when a young man or woman breaks from their parents and their beliefs, and decides for themselves what they will believe and what they will live and die for. This window of time is the college years.
HOW CAN WE MOST EASILY COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

English is spoken on almost every college campus throughout the world. It is the common language—the lingua franca. This is not true of the many villages, towns, and cities where people are less educated. You can walk onto almost any university in the world and get involved in a spiritual conversation in English without having to go through years of learning the language.

WHO WILL MOST EFFECT CHANGE WITHIN A FOREIGN COUNTRY?

All of the key leaders (political, social, military) in any foreign country ultimately come from universities. The most strategic way to reach a nation with the gospel is by reaching its next generation of leaders, and the greatest collection of them will always be at the campuses.

HOW CAN WE BEST ACCESS COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANITY IS NOT LEGAL?

The answer is a student visa. There are many Islamic states, for example, which won’t allow missionaries to enter their country. However, if you enter the country with a student visa, go to their university, and spend your U.S. dollars to take a class, you are relatively free to do anything you like and remain in the country. Thus reaching foreign universities is not only easy due to the speaking of English, in some cases it’s the only way to access a country with the gospel.

WHERE WILL THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS COME FROM IN THIS COUNTRY?

The majority of church leaders today were influenced or led into ministry through involvement with a campus ministry. It is in the context of a campus ministry that students learn to share their faith, disciple others, and lead spiritually. It is this introduction into ministry that brings to light for many their calling into the pastorate or some form of Christian leadership. Think about this for a moment. How many people from your home church have gone into ministry? Each year anywhere from a handful to several dozen leave the local campus ministry to be Christian leaders in their church or full-time pastors and missionaries.
HOW WILL WE GET MORE LABORERS TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION?

College students have their summers relatively free. Over the course of the summer, college students can go on missionary trips, get into any country with a student visa, and plant a ministry. College students have turned out to be an unforeseen (part-time) missionary labor force. There will be no other time in their lives where they will have three or four months free unless that time is preceded by the words, “You’re fired!”

THE REFINEMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The history of missions is one of zeal not acumen, hindsight instead of foresight. Missionaries are typically doers: they blaze a trail and then note after the fact what worked and what didn’t. Which, in hindsight, is probably best for the greatest challenge to missions is to go, and too much strategizing on the front end can lead to the planting of new missions agency in the states rather than new ministries overseas.

The campus ministry is no different and our current strategies are a product of several decades of adaptation, refinement, and probably some major screw-ups forever buried in a file drawer in Lake Hart with surviving members in Federal relocation programs. Many years ago we sent summer missions teams wherever there was an open door, or wherever anyone had a “heart” to go. But if these missionary initiatives were to bear lasting fruit, they needed more focus. This came in three areas.

First, there was the birth of the partnership strategy. Each region of the U.S. would take responsibility to pioneer ministry in three to five countries—no overlaps or overlooked nations. Agreements were drawn up to ensure that the task was completed and the labor force didn’t dry up—campus staff and students would continue to come for summer missions. When needed, multiple U.S. campuses would share the task of honoring these agreements. The shotgun missionary approach of the previous decades was becoming a little more like a guided missiles.

Second, there needed to be a refinement of the partnership process. This was broken into five stages sequencing U.S. involvement in developing the countries campus ministry. Here are those five stages:

• STAGE ONE: SUMMER PROJECT •

In about eight weeks, visiting teams of Christian students are able to create relationships, share the gospel, and disciple young believers on international campuses where the gospel has never traveled. They leave behind the seed of what will become a growing ministry on that campus.

• STAGE TWO: STINT •

How does this planted mustard seed become a growing movement? Short-term International (STINT) missionaries were sent to invest one or two years cultivating what was sown over the summer. They also
provide leadership, teaching, and further evangelism so that by the
time they leave, a healthy maturing ministry is in place.

- **STAGE THREE: INTERNATIONAL CAMPUS STAFF**

  Like the ministries planted by the apostle Paul, these movements still lack
  maturity, need leadership continuity, and require someone to make gospel
  inroads on campuses elsewhere. Filling this “Timothy” role are missionaries
  who will dig in and invest three to five years, or longer, in the culture.

- **STAGE FOUR: NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

  In this cycle of ministry, the leadership on the campus and in the coun-
  try is properly passed on to nationals: to those original converts now
  mature enough to lead the ministry in their own country.

- **STAGE FIVE: PARTNERING NATIONS**

  At this final stage new life emerges in two areas. The nation, young in
  its faith, becomes a participant in missions, sending their own students
  to minister in other nations. Concurrently, U.S. students are now free to
  partner with new campuses in other countries. This is the process.

Not all countries and not all campuses are equally strategic in getting to the entire
world, which is why we don't have campus staff at Hoboken Culinary college, though
I would volunteer if it became available—mmm donuts. So the third area of focus was
to identify 200 of the most highly leveraged campuses in the world and plans were
made to pioneer ministries at these locations. As of a couple of years ago, all 200 had
an established ministry.

These strategic refinements in our campus missions strategy were significant
enough to warrant a name and dedicated staff to aid in their development. This min-
istry is known today as the Worldwide Student Network (WSN), not to be confused
with the World Wide Web (WWW).

**THE NEW FRONTIERS**

Well that brings us just about current. So where do we go from here? The following are
the newest WSN initiatives and they all revolve around one principle, partnership.

**NATIONS PARTNERING WITH NATIONS**

As the leadership of these countries mature, we are entering a new phase in world missions,
the final phase of multinational partnerships: nations partnering with nations to reach still
other nations. This is where the missionary enterprise will grow exponentially.
Take, for example, a recent missions project held in Turkey. In the past, these projects were typically led by U.S. staff and students who travel to a partnership country to share the gospel. This was not the case here. This project comprised of staff and students from nine countries partnering together to reach Turkey.

And Europe is not the only place seeing this happen: Mexican students will be going to Chile; Thai students are going to Cambodia; Poland to Russia; Albania to Turkey; Egypt to the Middle East. We are witnessing a growing network of nations partnering with nations.

**PARTNERING WITH CHURCHES TO PLANT CHURCHES**

The campus ministry continues to pioneer in cities throughout the world and as the ministry grows and students graduate (which they tend to do), there is often no local church able to support and sustain these young believers. The situation, viewed from another angle, is not a problem, but an opportunity. Here is the critical mass of new Christians that could form the core of a church planting effort in that city and nation—a church planters dream.

This was always the long-term vision of Campus Crusade to reach every nation with the gospel using the college campus as the stepping stone. *No Boundaries* is a new strategy to take the vision beyond the college campus by forming partnerships with local churches, helping them to mobilize their labor, and linking our international campus ministry with their congregation, all with the goal of planting churches in that city.

**GLOBAL PARTNERS**

Global Partners is a growing network of business and professional leaders whose hearts are surrendered to Christ, and desire to leverage their access, platform, finances, and expertise to open up doors for the gospel around the world.

Globalization is the new economic reality. The world tethered ever tighter through the strands of technology, telecommunications, free markets, finance, and business.

This gives American business leaders a powerful platform to access countries around the world. The Global Partners strategy attempts to seize this opportunity, connecting godly business leaders with ministry venues, paving the way for evangelism and missions opportunities internationally.

**MISSIOLOGY**

Hopefully that provides a working knowledge of campus missions, which is a very strategic and very large slice of the mission’s pie. But it is not the whole pie. There is a world of church missions focused on the Great Commission but with a mandate to
plant churches within every people group on earth. In helping your disciple become a world Christian, you will find it useful to be familiar with the books and publications dedicated to church missions. They are a treasure trove of resources and information highly applicable to campus missions.

I highly recommend the book *Perspectives*. It contains the current thinking on world missions, the latest strategies, historical errors, motivation for missions, writings of the great missionaries, biblical teaching on missions, current statistics: it has everything. There are a ton of articles to pass on to your disciples to help them develop into world Christians. The book is a compendium of the class reading for a course of the same name—Perspectives. This course is taught at churches around the country and if it is available near you, consider taking your disciples with you.

This course and book come from the U.S. Center for World Missions, a great missionary organization. They also publish a monthly magazine called *Frontiers* that will help you keep in touch with what is happening in church missions around the world. Between the *Perspectives* book and the magazine you will have invaluable resources to share with your disciple.

While the focus of the U.S Center for World Missions is on church planting, there is so much commonality that it transfers well into campus missions. You’ll also find that some of the new ideas in church missions are already being implemented in some form in campus missions.

**CAMPUS, COVERAGE AND COMMUNITY**

The organization of Campus Crusade is the umbrella name for dozens of ministries other than campus. So where do all of these fit in? In fulfilling the Great Commission, Campus Crusade has a three-fold approach to reaching a country with the gospel. As mentioned, there is the campus mission strategy reaching the country through targeting the college audience. In addition to this is what is called the community strategy, which targets the major cities through a variety of means: business and athletic ministries, community outreaches, providing school teachers, assisting church plants, and whatever other creative means might be employed.

If you reach the epicenters of the campus and city, you have done much to reach the population of a country. But you still haven’t fully saturated it with the gospel. That’s why we have a coverage strategy. A good example of how this works, and by far the most effective, is the use of the “JESUS” film. Film teams scour the countryside looking to show the film in towns and remote villages. The team members who show the “JESUS” film partner with multiple churches and denominations to follow up and plant churches from the evangelistic fruit. More than six billion people have been exposed to the gospel through the “JESUS” film (this includes multiple viewings by people).

**YOUR EXAMPLE**

Our participation in missions is aided by knowing how our contribution fits into the bigger picture, and encouragement flows from knowing we have a feasible plan. If your goal is a disciple with a world vision you can bypass some of the information by simply going overseas and taking your disciple with you. There is nothing that communicates a heart for the world like the example you set. The reverse is also true: no matter how much or how well you communicate, if your disciples do not see your willingness to go, they will have their own hesitations.
Hey -
Just a quick note
to say hi, and
we are thinking about
you and missing you.

Sam

1979 Park Avenue
Winter Park, FL
32789
A cursory reading of the New Testament alerts us to the theological debates and differences that are a part of ministry, and a part of discipleship. I have presided over my fair share of ministry divisions and unfortunately ministry splits, and am convinced that how we deal with these differences and conflicts is every bit as important as the outcome. While wrestling with theological issues is unavoidable, wrestling with people over them can often be averted by maintaining three simple values: be knowledgeable, be honest, and be charitable.

**KNOWLEDGEABLE**

In dealing with theological differences, as a non-denominational ministry we have a greater challenge (because we don’t defend one position) as well as greater freedom (because we don’t have to defend one position). What we need to strive for is a greater understanding of the different positions on issues most likely to surface divisively. For example, let’s take the issue of free will and predestination. Wherever there’s a crack in the sidewalk, you’ll often find this weed growing out of it. Being knowledgeable means that I can lay out the two opposing viewpoints and give at least one verse that strongly supports their position. I want to express to my disciple that neither side is crazy. I want them to honestly understand why a person would hold this perspective. More important than the issue itself, I am helping my disciples respect these people by showing them that their belief is biblically justifiable.

After laying out the adjacent views, in this case a Calvinist and Arminian perspective, I now explain that there are those who hold a mediating position between the two. Here it would be some form of compatibilism. Whatever the issue, there are always two opposite convictions, with alternative positions held along a spectrum. One of the points of this exercise is to move my disciple away from polarities to the broader, but grayer road on which most people traffic.
Having accomplished this, it is important to state that within every major theological dispute there are viewpoints which go outside of acceptable parameters. For example, there are those who hold the view of an “openness of God” perspective in the free will/predestination debate. This teaches that God may not fully know the future. There are some in the charismatic camp that believe people cannot be certain they have the Holy Spirit if they do not speak in tongues. You will need to drive in certain tent pegs and explain where the debate crosses over a line and leaves the camp of orthodoxy. There are acceptable evangelical positions along a spectrum, and you need to define that spectrum. In a non-denominational movement you are a good steward if you can accurately map out the major geography of the debate, but also define where the map ends and where dragons and sea serpents dwell. To do this you must be knowledgeable.

HONEST

Now, even though I may have a viewpoint on the issue, the next thing I try to do is to be as honest with the biblical data as possible. For example, on the issue of eternal security, I might say that if Hebrews was the only book in the New Testament, I could be persuaded to believe that loosing my salvation was a viable option. (It’s best to acknowledge the difficulty of certain passages.) I would then state, “when combined with the entire council of scripture I don’t think these verses could be teaching this, and what makes more sense would be….” (In essence I’m teaching the need for a systematic theology not just a biblical one). Or on the issue of charismatic gifts, I might say that to whatever view one holds, it would be difficult to justify from Scripture a cessation of the gifts. I may deem them to have ceased but it would be based on observation and other factors more than a biblical argument. You may disagree, but this is my honest appraisal of the biblical data and that is what I share with my disciple.

Again, as important as the theological issue, I am teaching character: that truth and being truthful is more important than someone thinking I’m right. This will shape their biblical scholarship making honesty in interpretation the highest value, instead of looking for verses to justify a position.

CHARITABLE

Many theological convictions contain an underpinning of values. Let’s go back to the issue of Calvinism and Arminianism. Calvinists concerned for God’s glory see the limits of human freedom, defined by Arminians as detracting from the sovereignty of God. Those who hold to some position of free will are often concerned that in removing free will, God could seem responsible for evil and His governance could appear dictatorial and not benevolent. The point being, both are concerned with God’s glory and see the
other perspective as limiting that glory. There is a common value of God's glory—He is amazing—and with that comes a desire to defend against theological positions that impinge upon that glory.

I'm not saying that theological positions are relative. Some are true and others are false. Some are more accurate than others, and we should choose a perspective that has the most and best biblical support. But there are relative components to why we align with certain perspectives based on our experience of God and what we value about Him. When analyzed, Spirit-filled Christians often share a value of God's glory, which they think their position best defends. I have found it helpful to bring out this shared value in creating a foundation for unity in the body, and keeping my own mind from casting the judgment, “Idiots.”

**HERE’S WHAT I THINK**

Last, I think your disciple has a right to know what you think on the issue. And having created the context, you should explain your perspective. They will actually be more inclined to embrace your perspective having gone through the process because they see you as knowledgeable, gracious, and concerned for what is true. You have educated them on the issue, given them guidance, demonstrated character, and avoided sowing seeds of discord. Congratulations.
Hi,

Having been away so long, you get this sense of feeling lost, and like no place is really home. I spent the day remembering some of the reasons we took this trip and what we’ve learned along the way.

— Sam

section SIX
foundations & history
Chapter Forty Three

Selection

Discipling the right people

(Adapted from the Compass)

SELECTION: DISCIPLINING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Who should I disciple? Who should I invest my life in? The reality is that you can’t disciple everyone. You’re a full-time student or a busy staff member. Jesus didn’t disciple everybody, and so we need to choose wisely. The most important decision you make at the beginning of each ministry year will be choosing which individuals you will pour your life into. Let’s talk about why we must choose wisely, and then how to do it.

WHY MUST WE CHOOSE WISELY?

In Luke Chapter 6, observe how Christ chose to disciple, and the fact that He didn’t disciple everybody. Luke 6:12 says, “And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.” The text doesn’t say what Jesus prayed, only that He spent the whole night in prayer to God. You’ve got to wonder if at least some of the time was spent communing with the Father about the men that He was going to build the kingdom upon. Why? See verse 13, “And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.” There you see the names of the guys: Simon and Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, and all the gang. He chose twelve disciples.

Now watch what it says in verses 17-19, “And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.”

When He descended with the twelve, there was a great multitude of His disciples—others who wanted to be followers and learners of Christ. Jesus had a whole lot of people He could have chosen. But He chose twelve. Did He love all those other
people? Did He care about their needs? Did He have compassion? Of course He did. But He also knew, even as the very Son of God, that He could not do what we cannot do. He could not invest His life fully in hundreds of people, even though He was God in the flesh. For as a man He was limited in time and space and in how many people He could spend time with just like we are. So Jesus chose twelve.

WHY? FIVE REASONS TO CHOOSE WISELY

- YOU CAN ONLY DISCIPLE A FEW -

As a student, it’s just not possible to get deeply involved in ten, twelve, or fifteen people’s lives. You can’t do it. You simply don’t have that much time to spend with that many people. You may have a dozen come to your Bible Study and hang out, but you can’t give individual attention to that many people and also be a full-time student. Full time staff have a more time, but they too will need to make decisions, and draw lines based on capacity.

- IT’S WHAT JESUS DID -

Jesus invested in a few. We learn from Him because He’s the Master.

NOT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE DISCIPLED BY CAMPUS CRUSADE

Here’s the reality: there are a lot of Christians on campus and they don’t all want to be discipled by Campus Crusade, nor has God called us to disciple everybody. There are other good ministries on campus, and we can’t disciple everyone. We’ll work with the people who want to be a part of what we’re doing, and where God has called us to go.

NOT EVERYONE WANTS TO MOVE TOWARD BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

There are some believers on campus who don’t want to be discipled by anybody. There are believers who are at a point in their lives where frankly, Jesus is not the Lord of their lives. Jesus is not their number one lover and deepest passion. There may be commitment issues, priority issues and there are some for whom a boyfriend or girlfriend is more like the lord of their life. There are some Christians for whom GPA or resume is of higher priority than being a biblical disciple. Whatever the reason, there are believers who do not want to move toward biblical discipleship. They simply are unwilling to pay the price. That’s why we’ve got to choose wisely.
OUR LONG-TERM IMPACT IS CRITICAL

If you’re going to invest your life in someone, if you’re going to impart things that God has put into your life, don’t you want to know that your disciple is going to take what you teach them and be faithful to apply it? This principle should inform all the discipleship decisions you make over the coming years. Obviously we don’t have guarantees on anybody; no matter how promising someone may seem at the time, he may choose not to walk with God down the road and may not have the long-term impact we had hoped for. But by choosing biblical disciples wisely, our ministries will reproduce leaders who in turn will have impact on others.

HOW? FOUR WAYS TO CHOOSE WISELY

CAREFULLY OBSERVE POTENTIAL DISCIPLES

Ask questions about someone in whom you think you’d like to invest your life. There are several things to look for.

- Do they have a heart for God? Do they demonstrate a hunger to grow? Are they reading the Word? Are they having quiet times and showing a desire to get to know God? Are they asking you questions about their walk with God and spiritual growth? Are they dealing with sin in their life that the Holy Spirit reveals to them? Do they take advantage of opportunities to grow?

- Are they FAT (Faithful, Available, Teachable)? Faithful: Do they follow through on things? Do they attend Bible Study consistently? Do they want to be a part of the ministry? Available: Do they have time to meet? If you initiate getting together and they’re always too busy with other meetings, it’s going to be tough to disciple them. Teachable: You can know if someone is teachable by how they respond to what you try to impart to them. If you get a response like, “Oh, yeah, I’ve heard that before,” “I know that,” or “I was taught that before,” that person may not be teachable. One of the biggest disappointments about discipleship is when you try to work with someone who thinks they’ve got it all figured out.

- Are they socially and emotionally mature? Everybody’s got problems. We’re all dealing with issues, and you’re not looking for a perfect person who doesn’t have problems. Emotional maturity means that the person acknowledges their problems, is growing in their ability to trust Jesus with those problems and is involved in biblical community continuing to function and grow. Sometimes you’re going to get a person whose emotional needs are so deep that they’re not freed...
up to minister to others. Some people may need professional help. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul tells Timothy, “And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” Notice the four generations of spiritual multiplication: Paul to Timothy, to faithful men, to others. Paul’s implication is that Timothy should be teaching people who have the ability to teach others. Ask yourself if this person can relate well enough to others so that people will want to follow and listen to them.

- Will they go where God has called us to go as a ministry? As a campus ministry, we want to teach people to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith. If a person does not want to go in this direction, then it’s probably not best for you to disciple them. We want to develop people, and if this person doesn’t want to go in the direction of our ministry, it’s not your place to twist their arm. There is no need to disciple someone who does not have a passion for the things God has called us to as a ministry.

**CAST A VISION FOR GOD’S CALL**

- **TO BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP**

Sit down with the person you’ve observed and say, “This is where we’re going. We’re really committed to biblical discipleship. We want to help people to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith.” Cast a vision so you can invite this person to come with you toward biblical discipleship. Consider the timeline of college: everything we want to build into a disciple’s life during these four years involves equipping them to be a biblical disciple for the next fifty years of their life. No matter what their vocational calling is, we want them to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith for the rest of their life. If they’re a landscaper, wouldn’t you love for them to know how to lead other landscapers to Christ?

- **LAY OUT THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

If this is a worthy vision you’re casting, you’ll have to explain what it takes to get there. You might say, “I would like to ask you to be committed to come to the Bible Study every week, not just when it fits into your schedule.” Challenge this person to be discipled by you. You’re going to make a commitment to their life, so ask them for a reciprocal commitment—coming to Bible Study, meeting individually for discipleship, attending the weekly meeting so they will be a part of the larger body of believers. Lay out the vision, and tell them that this is what it’s going to take to get there. In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus encourages believers to count the cost before committing.
ASK THAT PERSON TO PRAYERFULLY DECIDE IF
  • THEY WILL MAKE A COMMITMENT •
Encourage them to ask these questions: Am I willing to count the
cost? Am I willing to be committed? This way, you’re not selecting
them out; you’re not determining if they’re worthy of being discipled.
You’re casting the vision and saying to them, “Is this where you want
to go?” They can decide, “Yes, that’s where I want to go,” or “No,
I don’t really want to go there. I’d rather give my life to something
else.” You may select who you’d like to work with based on your ob-
servations of that person, but they make the decision. It’s up to them
to count the cost and respond, “Yes, I’m in.”

Finally, when you do start a Bible Study for the first time, realize that there will be
new people who are young in their faith, and that they may not have those qualities we
look for in a potential disciple: they may not be teachable or come each week. Realize
that they may not be ready yet. You’re not challenging the whole group to discipleship.
Start out with a large number of possible people: six to eight potential disciples. Over
the course of time, you will be able to discern which of these really have a heart to be-
come a biblical disciple. Then give them a specific challenge. You may end up with just
three faithful disciples, but if chosen wisely, they will multiply and impact eternity.