

Report to the Fellowship Council

EVLC Leadership Development Team

The delegates of the 2008 International Conference developed and affirmed a Commitment to Common Mission (CCM), which called Grace Brethren churches worldwide to a decade of church planting, leadership training, and integrated ministries. While Moderator of the FGBC, Tom Hocking formed the Enduring Visionary Leadership Community, a community of people committed to the principles of the CCM, and which is comprised of three teams: church multiplication, leadership development, and integrated ministry.

The initial Leadership Development Team was composed of Bob Fetterhoff, Keith Shearer, Dave Lawson, Mike Yoder and Tom Julien. Upon his nomination for Moderator, Bob Fetterhoff dropped off the team. Randy Smith, the chairman of the Leadership Development and Continuing Education Team appointed by the AGBM, has been asked to be a member of the EVLC team, while continuing to work toward implementing the vision of the AGBM. The AGBM Team will focus mainly on training for vocational ministries, whereas the EVLC Team will focus on training of lay leaders, hoping many of them will be drawn into vocational ministries. The teams will seek to work together, and possibly will merge in the future. Further, both teams will strive to diminish the distinction between vocational and lay ministries.

The assignment given to our team is to:

1. Be the voice for the fellowship for their area of passion.
2. Develop goals for the FGBC in this area.
3. Network with like-minded believers and churches to learn from each other
4. Discover and champion existing churches and individuals who are doing effective ministry in this area.
5. Catalyze the development of action steps towards our goals.

The Leadership Development Team came together during the meetings of the EVLC held in Columbus on October 5-6. A second meeting of the team occurred at Wooster December 7. In addition there have been numerous exchanges of correspondence and telephone communications.

Extensive notes were taken by Mike Yoder of the December 7 meeting and are available to members of the Fellowship Council who would like to receive them.

The following is a summary of the planning of the team.

Purpose

The EVLC Leadership Development Team exists to see every member of our churches to rise to his spiritual potential through training that mobilizes for ministry leading to maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Vision

We look forward to a time when our movement will have captured the vision for equipping followers of Jesus Christ toward perpetual spiritual growth, which is manifested in enduring, mission-oriented ministry, in which disciples are winning the lost and developing them toward full devotion to Christ.

We envision focusing the main thrust of our leadership training on a network of church-based centers – some of which are physical locations and some virtual – but all set in a ministry context of a culturally relevant, aggressively evangelistic church. We desire every church in our Fellowship to have convenient access to

training in our Fellowship's core values of biblical truth, biblical relationships, and biblical mission. As a result, we hope to see men and women receive disciple-making ministry training in a healthy church context. We envision 60 training centers, or learning communities, in the next ten years, which are networked with one another and with an international movement of our Fellowship, and which are facilitating church planting in the U.S. and around the world.

Keys

We have identified seven keys for the development of a movement of leadership development in the FGBC.

1. **Key Cause:** That the FGBC will become an equipping church.
An equipping church is a church moving away from administering activities (ownership) to empowering people (unleashing).
2. **Key Commitment:** To equip equippers.
Equipping means empowering for ministry through intercession, involvement, instruction, and inspiration.
3. **Key Question:** What is an equipping church?
An equipping church is not just a church where ministry leaders do ministry, but a church where ministry leaders help others do ministry.
4. **Key Task:** For churches to develop an equipping culture.
An equipping culture values ministry above maintenance, people above programs, function above position, purpose above process, and knowing the Lord above knowing about Him.
5. **Key Process:** Networking of "blue ribbon" equippers.
Identify and network individual equippers and equipping churches, who have a track record of winning the lost and developing them to full devotion to Christ.
6. **Key Goal:** Establish regional training centers.
Regional training centers will give every Grace Brethren church convenient access to training in biblical truth, biblical relationships, and biblical mission.
7. **Key Philosophy:** Train *in* ministry, not *for* ministry.
Training in ministry will result from equipping men and women with both theology and ministry skills in the context of an evangelistic, culturally relevant, local church.

A Philosophy of Equipping

It was always the strategy of Jesus to unleash his ministry through the lives of those devoted to him. This involved deep relational contact and an intentional investment in their lives. The Twelve were the initial fruit of his investment. Empowered by the Spirit, those Twelve quickly became thousands as the Early Church multiplied throughout the known world. Leaders, most of whom were "unschooled, ordinary" men (Acts 4:13), poured themselves into the lives of new converts and witnessed the reality of transformed people. In their experience, it was truly the "spontaneous expansion of the church".

Seen from God's perspective, however, this revolution did not occur without design or intention. Indeed, the apostle Paul wrote that Christ himself was actively giving gifts to men – apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd, and teachers – so that all of these new followers of Jesus could together grow up in their faith (Eph.

4:11-ff). The presence of these key leaders would be instrumental in seeing a wave of equipping which permeated God's people.

Unfortunately, much of the history of the Church – the intervening 2000 years – has impeded the equipping paradigm which Jesus instituted. Whether through false doctrine, an unhealthy elevation of clergy, the professionalization of training, purely theoretical approaches to spiritual growth, or a host of other factors, widespread equipping has often been neglected. Even the evangelical movement's renewed emphasis on faithfulness to the Scriptures has often failed to foster a culture of equipping.

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches has not been immune. In our best moments, we have been reawakened to the priesthood of all believers, to discipling by imitation and instruction, to leaders characterized by godly living, and to a vision for the maturity of the whole church. But the history of the Church and our own ministry settings have exerted powerful influence. We have too often succumbed to cultural patterns rather than the paradigm given by Jesus. Too many of God's people fail to be equipped for growth and service in Christ's Church. Thus, we are again called to recognize where we have deviated and to commit ourselves anew to the *widespread, intentional equipping of the believers* entrusted into our care.

We believe that God has entrusted tens of thousands of believers into the care of FGBC churches. These men and women, boys and girls, have been bought at great price ... and have been spiritually conceived in order to grow to maturity. Their development must be our passion.

We believe that equipping is Christ's design for His Body. Growth into unity and maturity is the result of gifted leaders, empowered by the Holy Spirit, developing people to walk with Jesus and bear His fruit. This equipping – making disciples – stands at the center of Christ's commission to his Church (Matt. 28:18-20), and the many local churches which comprise it.

We believe that equipping believers is most effectively fostered through intentional training. As good as many events, programs, and gatherings may be, life change is best cultivated through repeated, relational contact between spiritual mentors and growing disciples. This training emphasizes ministry involvement and character development, as well as biblical understanding.

Finally, intentional equipping of believers ought to be widespread. Christ has not rescued many so that a select few can be accompanied to maturity. Rather, his intention is that all the members of His Body reach their full potential in Christ – in godliness, in unity, in service, and in witness. Our intention, indeed our great privilege, can be no less.

A Philosophy of Training

Though the training centers will be diverse in their organization and expression, they will all subscribe to a philosophy of training that is *holistic* in character (Philippians 4:9):

- teaching the whole truth (factual, personal, practical)
- to the entire person (head, heart, hands)
- by complete training (instruction, demonstration, application)
- for total results (knowledge, character, skill)

Holistic training is *incarnational, transformational and reproducible*.

1. Trainers will be committed to *implanting* biblical truth, and not merely *transplanting* biblical knowledge. This is the *pattern* of biblical training. (2 Timothy 1:13)

An informational approach to training only transplants knowledge that remains theoretical.

An *implantational* approach implants truth that germinates, becomes rooted in the soil, and produces fruit.

2. Trainers will be committed to implanting a biblical *worldview* through obedience-based training resulting in *cultural transformation*. This is the *deposit* of biblical training. (2 Timothy 1:14)

The foundation of transformational training is an adequate *deposit* of biblical truth, related to *knowing* God, *experiencing* God, and *serving* God. This deposit is the trainer's "seed bag" of basic truths to be implanted, personalized and applied, in order to transform the beliefs, values and behavior patterns of the learners.

2. Trainers will be committed to equipping leaders to train others. This is the *process* of biblical training. (2 Timothy 2:2)

The objective of biblical training is to equip others for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11). Our success in the ministry is measured by the quality of our successors. This can only happen when the trainer is a demonstration by his life of the truth he is teaching.

Training Competencies

The following is an extensive list of competencies that can be used as a guide for formulating training ministries. It is not a curriculum. Since effective training is done with the end in mind, every training ministry must be adapted to the needs of those being trained. These needs will be determined both by the current level of competencies of the trainees, and by the nature of their ministry.

BEING: possess Christlike qualities, fruit of the Spirit, boldness and love in outreach and relationships, faithful stewardship in finances as well as the use of talents and gifts, positive submission to authority, identify and exhibit positive character traits as named in Proverbs, identify and exhibit the attributes of love (1 Cor. 13)

KNOWING: be able to think through a basic knowledge of each book of the Bible; demonstrate knowledge of Bible doctrine (passing a licensure exam or other as appropriate); supply Bible verses and an explanation for specific points of basic doctrine; be able to give a basic defense of the faith; be able to create or explain a basic time line of Bible persons and events from Creation to Eternity; present and explain Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament differentiating those that relate to His first coming, from the tribulation prophecies, and the millennial prophecies; a familiarity with the commands of the Mosaic Law, ability to use a variety of Bible study methods - verse by verse, topical, biographical, word study, doctrinal, etc.; ability to use common tools of Bible study - concordance, commentaries, lexicons, encyclopedias, dictionaries, other ; ability to explain the Gospel in a variety of ways; explain how to address some common counseling problems from a biblical perspective;

DOING: identify and use own gifts and abilities (relate this to Eph.4:11 - five leadership gift functions); positive Christlike relationships; how to reconcile a relationship; gather people into groups (ABFs, small groups, church plants); lead people to salvation in Christ; teach at various age levels; prepare people for baptism and conduct or assist in the baptism; lead an evangelistic Bible study; conduct or assist in premarital counseling, a wedding, a funeral, child dedication, communion; participate in some cross-cultural ministry project; visit the sick, the aged, prisoners, rescue missions, teen pregnancy centers, drug rehabs, urban ministry, rural ministry, etc.; conduct a stewardship emphasis - fund raising, capital programs, debt reduction, support raising, taking an offering, etc.; lead committee or board meetings; initiate and conduct prayer groups or prayer meetings; demonstrate that he has received answers to prayer; participate in anointing service; plan and carry out a meaningful worship service; demonstrate servanthood including willingness to do manual chores; write a lesson outline or sermon outline and present it; develop and implement vision and strategy for a ministry program; assess the gifts needed and recruit people to a visionary ministry; help edify other leaders to minister and reproduce.

Next steps

As a team, we envision the following steps toward the implementation of the vision:

1. Identify at least six locations for the initial training centers. The main factor in the choice of the training centers will be the presence of a trainer who is both qualified and committed to the vision of the EVLC.
2. Bring the potential trainers together to share the EVLC vision and formulate plans for the creation or development of the center.
3. Assign each training center to a member of the EVLC team for the development of the center.

During this time, the Leadership Development Team will continue to function as a team, meeting together to assess the progress of the ministry.

Each center will see itself as a part of a team, each one submitting to the principles adopted by all; no leadership academy will operate independently.

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