

The Making of a Champion: Raising Up Next-Generation Leaders in YWAM

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This paper is based on a master's thesis investigating keys to more effectively prepare and release new leaders within Youth With A Mission (YWAM). A thematic review of literature woven with lessons from the author's leadership journey provides the background for the empirical study in which sixteen executive ministry leaders were interviewed about the development of young leaders. The interviews used sixteen questions, and the responses are summarized with practical steps from the author's local ministry context.

Background

Value number six in Youth With A Mission's *Foundational Values* document states that we champion young people.¹ It's one of the things we do best. We believe that God has gifted and called young men and women to spearhead the vision and ministry of YWAM. We are committed to valuing, trusting and releasing them. This, I believe, is one of the reasons we have been successful during the first 55 years of our existence as a movement. We have been willing to try new things in new ways and, most of all, we have been willing to do it with 18 to 25 year olds. When Loren and Darlene Cunningham first started sending out YWAM teams in the sixties, they had a mandate from God to mobilize young people and send them to the most remote parts of the earth. It was unprecedented. While championing young people has been a catalyst for exponential growth, there is a caveat. The new ministries we start often struggle to survive within just a few years. I believe there are several reasons for this:

1. A lack of ongoing coaching: If the young pioneer does not initiate and maintain a relational connection with other leaders, especially more experienced ones, he or she will usually struggle to survive.
2. The absence of community: God never intended us to operate outside of a close-knit, relational environment. Without the support of the body of Christ, it will be a challenge for an inexperienced leader to last long term.
3. A premature commissioning. The Bible says that an inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end (Prv 20:21 ESV). Promote a person before they are ready, and they will likely flounder in their new role. Jesus told his disciples that he was appointing them to go and bear fruit - fruit that would last (Jn 15:16).

To plant ministries that endure, we must prepare adequately on the front end. If we can adequately address the challenges related to "coaching," "community," and "commissioning," we will be well on our way both to greater fruitfulness and fruitfulness that lasts.

¹ Youth With A Mission. "YWAM Foundational Values," accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.ywam.org/about-us/values>.

The Importance of Discipleship

Just as he was about to anoint Eliab as the next king of Israel, God whispered to Samuel, “Don’t look at his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (I Sm 16:7 RSV). God’s word declares that he searches the whole earth for those whose hearts are fully committed to him (II Chr 16:9 NLT). Those he finds usually still have a lot to learn, but their hearts are in the right place.

David was a teenager when God appointed him as the next king of Israel. He wasn’t the only young candidate for leadership. Daniel, Jeremiah, Samuel, and Mary are all examples of young people, many teenagers, whom God used because he saw their hearts were in the right place. Josiah was barely eight when he became king. Fortunately, he followed the example of his forefather David and did what was right in the sight of the Lord (II Kgs 22:1-2 NLT). That’s why God used him, but things don’t always turn out that way. Sometimes young people start strong and then stop growing. If our personal growth plateaus we relinquish our authority to lead. Kenneth Blanchard and Mark Miller remind us that the path to increased influence, impact and effectiveness is paved with personal growth.²

Spiritual coaching is valuable but not strictly essential: Jeremiah had nobody but God to champion him (Jer 1:4-10 NLT). The same could be said of David, but these were the exceptions. Samuel had Eli, John Mark had Barnabas, and a young thirteen-year-old Mary, chosen to be the mother of Jesus, had her older cousin Elizabeth to support her (Lk 1:56 NIV). Beth Moore reminds us “We long to find someone who has been where we’ve been, who shares our fragile places, who sees our sunsets with the same shades of blue. Though wonderful, Mary’s news was traumatic. How kind of God to provide someone to share her joy, her peculiarity, her belief in the impossible!”³ God aids us by providing others who have already walked down the same pathway to be his ears and voice in our times of uncertainty.

The best example of coaching leadership was Jesus himself. He spent three years investing in twelve young men. When his time on earth was drawing to a close, they were the ones to whom he entrusted his Kingdom. He told them to go out and do what they had seen him do (Jn 20:21 NLT). If Jesus spent three years training these twelve, what does that say about the importance of discipleship? How could anyone improve on his model?

Five Leadership Non-Negotiables from Our Journey

When God called us to Denver, it didn’t make a lot of sense at first. My wife and I had been living at the US Center for World Missions in Pasadena, California when Ralph Winter first started talking about “People Groups” beyond the reach of traditional missions. As God began to speak to us about leaving Los Angeles we just assumed it was because he was sending us overseas - and then he told us to go to Denver. We didn’t even want to stay in the United States, but it was clear that this was what God was saying. So, we packed our belongings and headed

² Kenneth Blanchard and Mark Miller, *Great Leaders GROW: Becoming a Leader for Life* (San Francisco: Brett-Koehler Publishers, 2012), 9.

³ Beth Moore, *Jesus the One and Only* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2013), 26.

east toward the Rocky Mountains. It was August 1984. It wasn't until we got to Denver that God gave us a clearer picture of what he had in mind. He showed us that there is a difference between a *burden* and a *calling*. Just because you have a burden for something does not necessarily mean you are the one to do it. God showed us that our role was to make the vision clear for others to run with it (Hab 2:2). We were to train others to go.

Over the years, we've sent out many teams from our base. Some of them have flourished but others, unfortunately, returned home after a few short years. There were times I wondered if it was even worth the time and effort. It takes a huge investment of time, finances and energy to prepare a team, especially the leader. Then God convicted me of letting my lack of success compromise my obedience to his instruction. When I realized I'd been doing that I got on my knees and repented of my unbelief. I made a vow to never stop doing what God had called me to do regardless of the outcome. And then he encouraged me in a strange way. It dawned on me that even Jesus, the greatest leader in history, didn't bat a thousand either.⁴ As George Otis Jr. put it, no other life has impacted the world more than his,⁵ yet he also saw some of his efforts come to nothing. Strangely, I was encouraged by that.

It was about this time the Lord spoke to me through the Parable of the Sower (Mt 13:1-23). Not everyone gets the benefit of sowing in fertile fields, where temperature and precipitation are ideal, and bumper crops are harvested year after year. Some are called to difficult places where they will rarely, if ever, see measurable success in terms of numbers. It's just the way it is. But if nobody goes to the hard places the gospel will never reach the ends of the earth. I felt that God just wanted us to do our part, to develop leaders as best we could, and leave the rest up to him. It was incredibly liberating.

The main thing we felt responsible to do was to position each team for maximum effectiveness, focusing primarily on the leader. The leader was the key. If we chose the right person and trained him or her well, then the team would have the best chance to make it in the long run. We identified the following five non-negotiables for a young leader to succeed.

Desire

Desire was the first prerequisite Paul gave to Timothy as he was choosing his leadership team in Ephesus. In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul writes, "If someone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good work" (NET). From the outside, it's a lot easier to see the privilege than the cost, and it comes as a shock to many young leaders to suddenly face the hidden challenges of leadership, like when people distance themselves from you or criticize you. If they don't want leadership with all of their hearts, they will consider quitting when times get tough. Desire is one of the key elements to carry them through the hard times.

Personal Integrity

Personal integrity is so important I cannot underscore it enough. The word itself means "undivided." A person has integrity when there is no separation between what they believe and how they behave. When a young leader is faced with personal, financial, or team-related

⁴"To bat 1000": a baseball term, meaning 100 percent success against tremendous odds.

⁵ George Otis Jr., *The God They Never Knew: The Tragedy of Religion Without Relationship*, Rev. ed. (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1982), 99.

problems, he will often be tempted to cave in under the pressure. As Steve Forbes and John Prevas remind us “Character matters in leadership. Alexander the Great had exceptional leadership skills that enabled him to conquer the eastern half of the ancient world, but he was ultimately destroyed by his inability to manage his phenomenal success.”⁶

Crucial to a lifestyle of integrity is an awareness of where our weaknesses lie. Hebrews 12:1 says that we all have sins that *easily* entangle us. A young leader must be acutely aware of the sins that could derail her life and ministry and stay as far away from them as possible. The next three prerequisites are interconnected, first stated jointly and then as stand-alone principles: a leader must be able to see what God is doing in a given situation, explain it clearly to others, and be willing to go first. All three are essential for a leader.

Vision

Vision is the ability to see what God wants to do in a given situation. It is essential for a leader. He must be in step with God. If he struggles to hear the voice of God, he will end up relying mostly on his own logic and personal intuition, which is a hit-and-miss proposition, and a big problem when you have people following you. Having a clear vision is paramount. Even if a leader has the ability to explain things clearly and is willing to lead out, if she doesn't have a clear vision of what God wants to do, then people will admire her courage but never know for certain if they are really following God or just her own good ideas.

Teaching

If a leader sees what God wants to do and is willing to lead out, but has difficulty explaining it, then people might follow for a while but quit somewhere along the way because they forget why this was important. 1 Timothy 3:2 lists “able to teach” as one of the prerequisites for leadership. Teaching was certainly one of the traits Jesus embodied during his earthly ministry. He was always coaching and instructing people wherever he would go, and he would do it in such a way that captivated the whole audience, from the youngest to the oldest. As Mark 4:34 indicates, Jesus taught primarily through storytelling. Jedd Medefind and Erik Lokkesmoe observe that “Stories dress concepts and ideas in a form capable of enchanting both large-eyed children and cynical old lawyers; they entertain illiterate laborers as well as sophisticated intelligentsia; they grip the imagination of wiggly boys and distracted young mothers.”⁷ Teaching is paramount for a leader.

Aristotle divided the means of persuasion into three categories: *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. In *Writing Arguments*, John Ramage and John Bean tell us that while *ethos* (Greek for “character”) refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the messenger, *pathos* (Greek for “suffering” or “experience”) is associated with the emotional and the imaginative impact of the message on an audience, and *logos* (Greek for “word”) refers to the internal consistency of the message, the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting

⁶ Steve Forbes and John Prevas, *Power Ambition Glory: the Stunning Parallels Between Great Leaders of the Ancient World and Today...and the Lessons You Can Learn* (Crown Business, 2010).

⁷ Jedd Medefind and Erik Lokkesmoe, *The Revolutionary Communicator: Seven Principles Jesus Lived to Impact, Connect and Lead* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004), 99-100.

evidence.⁸ A leader's communication must possess all three qualities if he is going to have people follow him. He must connect with them through the way he communicates and, most of all, his team needs to feel that they can trust him. This leads us to the final quality.

Willingness to go first

If a leader sees what God wants to do and has the ability to articulate it, but is unwilling to go first, then people will understand what they are supposed to do but will never end up doing it because they have no godly example. "The people [were] drawn to Jesus because he was a man who lived the words he spoke, a man who proclaimed a new kingdom with his words and then made it possible, tangible and immediate with his actions."⁹ The apostle Peter outlines three wrong motives for leading others: obligation, money, and power, and then says, never do it for those reasons, instead "lead them by your own good example" (1 Pt 5:2-3 NLT).

The Essence of Discipleship

For young people to launch ministries of enduring fruitfulness, they must be trained adequately on the front end. The New Testament term for this process is "discipleship." It's the very thing Jesus told his own disciples to do (Mt 28:19-20), and his mandate takes on even greater weight when we consider that it was the last thing he instructed them to do. For discipleship to be all Jesus intended it to be, it must be relational and practical.

Relational Discipleship

I grew up in Argentina in the early seventies. My dad pastored a small congregation in a suburb of Buenos Aires called Flores. Our church was a few miles from a large charismatic church led by a fiery, flamboyant preacher by the name of Juan Carlos Ortiz. Ortiz's flourishing congregation was largely focused on cell groups. The whole church was involved in small groups, where the bulk of the teaching took place. Juan Carlos wrote a book about it called *Disciple*,¹⁰ but the concept wasn't that innovative, really, when you think about it. It was just a facsimile of what we read about in the Book of Acts. The key was the relational component. That was the catalyst that brought everything else together. Take that one ingredient out and the whole system breaks down, and all you have left are lifeless, perfunctory activities.

I've observed the latter in YWAM recently, mostly at some of our larger centers, even our own at times. It makes me wonder if growth can actually be counterproductive to the process of discipleship, especially if ongoing mechanisms are not put in place to foster our relationships with one another. I know we have those mechanisms in our training schools but the mechanisms usually disappear once someone joins staff.

Practical Discipleship

Discipleship is for many a catchword that evangelicals enthusiastically endorse but few have studied or defined biblically.¹¹ So what is biblical discipleship? The best example we have

⁸ John D. Ramage and John C. Bean, *Writing Arguments*, 4th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 81-82.

⁹ Jamie Arpin-Ricci, C.J., *The Cost of Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 30.

¹⁰ Juan Carlos Ortiz, *Disciple* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1975).

¹¹ A. Boyd Luter Jr., "A New Testament Theology of Discipling" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 2.

is the life of Jesus himself, and how he disciplined the twelve young men he called to follow him. His approach was steeped in experience and observation. He used the stuff of everyday life as props for what he taught them day by day. By following him and seeing him in action, they would learn experientially.¹² In YWAM we use the term *live-learn*, but it's basically Jesus' prototype. There is an axiom of the three-year process he employed to mold this band of unschooled ruffians into the leaders they would one day become: "He did it, they watched. He did it, they helped. They did it, he helped. They did it, he left." And it took three whole years!

The very thing that attracted me to YWAM when I joined up in the late seventies was that it was relational and hands-on. It was about modular education, learning on the go, putting everything into practice right away, doing and then teaching (Acts 1:1).

Three Ways to Disciple

Personal Coaching

We all need people who invest in us so we can, in turn, invest in the lives of others. This is how the Great Commission was meant to function. It was intended to be an ongoing process of multiplication. As Gordon MacDonald reminds us, a big mistake we easily make in church is "thinking that the people we teach are the last link in the chain. We need to put in motion this process of mentoring, a process that will perpetuate itself generation after generation because this is a fact: Even after you're dead, people will still be influenced by those you have influenced."¹³ The New Testament is clear that this is to be an ongoing practice until "the end of the age" (Mt 28:20 NLT).

Personal coaching is what Paul did for Timothy. We need more people like this: those whose only interest is in seeing that person do their best so they can be their best. A coach will exert external force to keep the person on task so they can reach their intended goal. The chances of actually following through with decisions to change behaviors are slim, but, according to David VanDenburgh, coaching is what greatly improves the odds.¹⁴ The Book of Acts and Paul's letters show he revisited his converts. The primary motive for his second missionary journey was to visit those he and Barnabas had led to Christ on their previous trip (Acts 15:36). Even at the start of Paul's third missionary journey, the spiritual welfare of those he had led to Christ on his first trip – several years earlier – was still his concern (Acts 18:23).

Paul chose only a handful of young leaders. He was less interested in some of them, like John Mark, but he saw something special in Timothy, Titus and Silas, and poured time and effort into them. Jesus was also very purposeful in choosing his twelve. Selection is a crucial component to effective discipleship. I've messed up here. On a handful of occasions I was so focused on getting the job done that I commissioned and sent young leaders prematurely, a mistake I wish I could undo. The "come one, come all" mentality may generate quick growth, but will likely be counterproductive in the long run. You could give months or years of your life and

¹² John D. Lottes, "Jesus as Mentor: Biblical Reflections for Ministry with Young Adults," *Currents in Theology and Mission* (Apr 2005): 133.

¹³ Gordon MacDonald, "Discipleship through Mentoring," *Ministry Matters* (Oct 2011), accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1685/discipleship-through-mentoring>.

¹⁴ David VanDenburgh, "Coaching for Leaders," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* (2007): 55.

come away empty handed. Hearing from God in prayer is a key element in selection. Jesus spent all night in prayer choosing his disciples (Lk 6:12-13 NLT).

We have considered the role of the discipler, but personal coaching must be mutual to be effective. How should you choose a personal coach? Consider the following eight qualities when choosing a personal coach.

A good coach is someone of *credibility*, someone you can trust and respect, who can credibly say like Paul did “imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (I Cor 11:1 NLT). Research on coaching successful executives shows the importance of them having a credible coach.¹⁵

Your coach needs to be a person of *intentionality*. Discipleship requires dedicated time and effort. When Jesus made disciples, he didn’t plan a meeting for 7:00 pm at the synagogue. He went down to the shore and spoke their language. He got involved in their lives.¹⁶ The need for intentionality in discipleship applies in a local church context as well as in YWAM. Wayman Ming Jr. notes that although many local church leaders really want to see Christ change every area of their lives, senior church leaders are typically “consumed with preserving their own spiritual health and maintaining the existing church machinery,” and find intentional development of the spiritual growth of those under them to be “mystical and messy.”¹⁷

Your coach needs to exemplify *encouragement*. Young leaders need those who will come alongside of them and lift them up when they are struggling. Ron Jenson says that to encourage means “to inspire with courage,” “putting your arm around someone, calling him alongside . . . and stimulating a person to positive action.”¹⁸ At all stages of life, we need those who care about us enough to love, discipline, encourage and champion us. We have a crisis in the church today in part because so many next-generation leaders never had a good relationship with their own father; a coach that encourages steps into that gap.

A good coach must have *the ability to spot and develop talent*. Henry and Richard Blackaby tell us that General George Marshall, the respected leader of Allied forces in World War II and later architect of the famous Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe, kept a “black book” of soldiers who showed promise in battle. When he encountered a young soldier with leadership ability, he added his name to the book. When a vacancy was presented in the officer corps, Marshall would refer to his list of qualified candidates. This system enabled Marshall to develop a large military organization filled with talented and effective officers.¹⁹

A worthy coach also *maintains ongoing personal development*. Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Prize Laureate for Literature, put it like this: “A lamp can never light another flame unless it continues to burn its own flame.”²⁰ As a young leader you need someone who is continuing to

¹⁵ Graham Jones and Kirsty Spooner, “Coaching High Achievers,” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 58, no. 1 (2006): 40-50.

¹⁶ MacDonald, “Discipleship through Mentoring.”

¹⁷ Wayman Ming, Jr. “Re-formation: Coaching Leaders at Higher Vision Church, Valencia, California” (PhD diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2014), ix.

¹⁸ Ron Jenson, *Achieving Authentic Success* (Temecula, CA: Future Achievement International, 2003), 141.

¹⁹ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 135.

²⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/722250>.

read, and learn and grow - someone who is moving forward in their own personal life and development.

A good coach models *transparency*. People can learn more through this than almost anything else in our teaching, and it's what this generation wants - they want authenticity. Brad Lomenick expresses this heart-cry for authenticity:

We may not show it, but we truly desire to be mentored. . . . We are hungry for mentors and are open to passing on their wisdom. And not just your successes and the things you've done right. We want to know what you've failed at, both to make you "human" as well as to learn from your experience so we won't make the same mistakes.²¹

A good coach is *impartial*. John Wesley once said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world. I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen."²² You need to look for a John Wesley to lead you - someone who is willing to invest in your life no matter your credentials.

Finally, a good coach models a *willingness to pass on the torch*. A personal coach must understand the pivotal role he or she has been given. Though the coach need not retire from their calling, there comes a time when the anointing is on the younger leader and it's time for transition. If the leader becomes possessive the transition could drag on for years and waste everyone's time. Are you being raised up under someone willing to hand you the torch when your time comes? John Ortberg notes that "A refusal to let go of power, an inability to acknowledge aging, or the disappointment with how ministry has turned out, can all dilute the power of one generation to sound the trumpet for another . . . as we get older, sounding that trumpet is one of the most important gifts we can give."²³

Peer Coaching

Ron Jenson notes that "It is important to have a close, covenant-level relationship with one or two other people – people with whom you can be utterly candid and from whom you will receive penetrating insight and honest advice for your own personal development."²⁴ We should never underestimate the power of peer discipleship, such as what happened between David and Jonathon in ancient Israel. When David entered the tent of Saul with the head of Goliath, celebrating the greatness of God, and Jonathan, the rightful heir to the throne, experienced the beginning of a covenant relationship with David, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sm 18:1-2 NLT).

David's relationship with Jonathan exemplifies the current trend of peer coaching, a process Lynda McDermott describes as when "two or more people who share common interests

²¹ Brad Lomenick, "Fourteen Things Older Leaders Should Know about Younger Leaders," accessed November 20, 2017, <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/150367-emerging-leadership-14-characteristics.html>.

²² John Wesley, accessed November 20, 2017, https://blog.logos.com/2011/04/ten_thought-provoking_john_wesley_quotes/.

²³ John Ortberg, "The Gap: The Fractured Word of Multi-Generational Church Leadership," accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/summer/thegap.html>.

²⁴ Ron Jenson, *Taking the Lead* (Temecula, CA: Future Achievement International, 2005), 39.

or goals collaborate to help each other become more successful in their work or personal lives.”²⁵ We not only need peers to encourage us, but probably more importantly, we need peers willing to confront us. Bill Hybels contends “Real love is always both tender and tough. May God give us the sensitivity to know when to show each kind of love and the courage to do whatever love demands.”²⁶ Solomon in Prv 27:6 said that the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy. That’s the essence of peer coaching.

A Mentoring Community

Everyone should have a mentor who knows them intricately, but why not have several? The perfect environment for a young leader to thrive is to have two, three, or even more, who can speak into their life. There’s balance and safety in this biblical formula (Prv 11:14 NLT). This is what a mentoring community is all about. A. Boyd Luter contends that the term “disciple” does not appear after Acts 21 because it’s replaced by the term “one another.”²⁷ In other words, discipleship should be carried out in both a personal as well as a corporate setting. The best leadership coaching takes advantage of a large network of relationships. Research shows that leaders who want to improve their leadership skills are more successful when they involve the people they live and work with.²⁸

In her acclaimed book on the “twenty-somethings,” Sharon Daloz Parks underscores the critical roles of not only the mentor, but also the mentoring environment and mentoring community as contexts that nurture growth of young adults toward maturity and wholeness. These mentoring environments serve young adults with a network of belonging and “offer a powerful milieu and a critical set of gifts in the formation of meaning, purpose, and faith.”²⁹

A mentoring community is a network of belonging that constitutes a spacious home for the potential and vulnerability of the young adult imagination in practical, tangible terms, a sociality that works physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually as the young adult becomes more fully at home in the universe.³⁰ Young adults are drawn to places that nourish them: places that in very practical terms recognize that the body, the heart, and the intellect are intimately interrelated and the whole is nourished.³¹

Another important aspect of the mentoring community, especially in a YWAM context, is that it should be outward-focused. My personal experience, dating back to the mid 70’s, is that there are two types of communities. Some are inward-focused: a place to retreat to, and others are outward-focused: a place to go from. The latter is the type of community we should have in YWAM. There are other ministries with a primary focus on healing, restoration and the all-

²⁵ Lynda McDermott, “Tapping the Wisdom of Peers,” *Training and Development* (May 2012), accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.td.org/Publications/Magazines/TD/TD-Archive/2012/05/Tapping-the-Wisdom-of-Peers>.

²⁶ Bill Hybels, *Who You Are When No One’s Looking* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 79.

²⁷ Luter, “A New Testament Theology of Discipling,” 9.

²⁸ Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard, *The Drucker Foundation: The Leader of the Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 227-237.

²⁹ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 127.

³⁰ Lottes, “Jesus as Mentor,” 129.

³¹ Parks, 156, quoted in Lottes, 137.

important role of ministering to Christ through prayer and worship. I'm not minimizing these in any way because they serve a key role in the body of Christ, but the YWAM community is different. It's a place to go from. YWAM communities exist primarily for leadership development and the releasing of those raised up to go and fulfill the Great Commission. It's discipleship as a means to an end.

Jesus' prayer for his disciples was not just that they would be unified. There was also a missional component to his prayer. It was about taking the love they had experienced for one another and spreading it throughout the whole world. It was about multiplication. Jesus consecrated the disciples in order that they might participate in his mission for the glory of the Father. As Clinton Morrison says, "Jesus prayed for them that, although they were the objects of the world's hatred, they might remain faithful to the mission in the world, whose purpose is to bring eternal life to those who believe."³²

Empirical Study

Methodology

The empirical research involved interviews of sixteen leaders of YWAM ministries. The leaders had a combined total of 350 years of leadership experience, an average of over 20 years each. The leaders come from ten different nationalities, and though they travel and minister widely outside their place of residence, they reside in and direct ministry centers in nine nations on five continents. Each of the interviewees was asked a series of sixteen identical questions, some open-ended ("What all-important advice would you give to a young leader before he is commissioned?") and some binary ("Do you believe the development of a young leader should be done in a community setting?").

Results

The responses highlight that YWAM is a context in which young leaders are given a chance to prove themselves, but are also expected to let themselves be taught. In the first open-ended question "What all-important advice would you give to a young leader before he is commissioned?" the most common responses were "be teachable" (5x), "walk in humility" (4x), and "listen to God's voice" (4x). A similar question later in the interview process ("What essential piece of advice would you give to a young leader before he departs?") the most common responses were "never give up" (4x), and "make sure you have a clear vision" (3x).

In response to "Do you believe the development of a young leader should be done in a community setting?" ten leaders said it is "extremely important" and another five indicated it is either "very important" or "somewhat important."

When asked "How important is ongoing spiritual training in the lives of leaders and staff?" ten said that ongoing spiritual training is "essential."

³² Clinton D. Morrison, "Mission and Ethic: An Interpretation of John 17," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* (1965): 264.

The question “Should a leader look for ‘fertile soil’ in which to begin a new work?” highlights the emphasis in YWAM on decentralization, that the leadership of each new initiative is locally-directed rather than centrally planned. How should the leaders of a new initiative decide where to focus their energies? Should we make a priority of the “ripe harvest fields”? The responses were very diverse, with nearly half affirming the importance of looking for fertile soil to sow into, and close to half affirming that the priority is to follow God’s direction independent of the difficulty of the context with which the team engages.

When asked “What people skills are important for a young leader?” over half responded “Be a good listener” (9x), far ahead of “unconditional love” (2x), “consistency” (2x), and “seeing the good in others” (2x).

The importance of teaching in the YWAM context was manifested in responses to the question “In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul said that a leader must be able to teach. Should this be a requirement for leadership?” All but one of the respondents indicated that “Being able to teach is important,” a tall order for young leaders. Additional comments to the question affirmed that “teaching does not have to take place in a classroom,” can be “spur of the moment,” and that “what is important is that all teaching is supported by the leader’s life.”

Not surprisingly, when asked “Should age be a factor in an organization that seeks to champion young people?” the majority indicated that age is “irrelevant” (9x). Others responded with more nuance, that it “depends on the context,” that it is “marginally important” (2x), and that “experience matters” (3x).

When asked “Is it advantageous for a leader to be married? Why?” ten responded “Yes” and four “No.” Those who affirmed the importance of marriage in the life of the leader mentioned the role it plays in providing balance, mutual support, and accountability. One respondent (David Hamilton) spoke for the classic New Testament position when he said ““I think there's an advantage to obeying God. So if he calls you to marriage, yes, if he calls you to singlehood, yes. That's what Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 7. So there are obviously certain advantages to being single and other advantages to being married. It's really what has God called you to.”

In other questions, respondents were unanimous in affirming that “peer mentoring is important in the life of the young leader,” and almost unanimous (14 of 16) in affirming that “young leaders need spiritual mentors.”

Discussion of Results: Traits to Look For in an Emerging Leader

Within the framework of discipleship those with a gift to lead will begin to stand out. Often, those expected to rise up never do, and others come out of nowhere to become some of the best we’ve ever trained and sent out. When a leader begins to emerge the following seven traits are important to watch for.

Vision

The vision has to be God’s vision, and the leader a God-led leader. The emerging leader must develop the ability to seek God’s heart and listen to his voice about the agenda to be

pursued. Then and only then can the leader be certain that God will be the source, the power, and the goal of the enterprise. And there's more: people are drawn to vision. They want to invest their time and money into something that brings hope and excitement for the future. Loren Cunningham reminds us that "Vision draws workers. As workers come it validates your ministry and people will begin to give to it."³³

A Big-Picture Frame of Mind

The best leaders are usually generalists not specialists -- they stand back to see the whole spectrum rather than focus primarily on one area of interest. Even if she has that specific skill-set, devoting too much energy to one area can be counterproductive to growth. She must stand back to see the big picture and make room for the specialists. A primary leader sees life through a telescope not a microscope.

One Who Stays Connected

Once you're on your own you have to be deliberate about keeping a relational link with those who sent you out and with others who are doing the same thing you're doing. It won't take long for you to become isolated if you're not proactive, which is precisely the devil's strategy to bring you down. In military terms it's called a *blockade*, a tactical maneuver to defeat an enemy by cutting off his food source, supplies and communication. If you've got an independent streak within you you're going to have to watch out for this. Leaders need other leaders, not just their own followers. I heard someone say it like this once: "Everyone needs a Paul and a Barnabas and a Timothy." We all need mentors, peers and disciples.

A Champion of Others

There's going to come a time, maybe sooner than you think, when you'll be faced with the same test your leaders faced with you. It's the test of keeping or releasing quality young leaders rising up under your leadership. It's hard when they are gifted and you'd rather keep them in the fold, but if your ultimate ambition is for the Kingdom of God at large you'll let them go. My friend Sean Lambert put it this way: "A great leader will always be secure enough to champion the visions of up-and-coming leaders under him. He won't be threatened when strong young visionaries emerge, on the contrary, this is what validates him as a leader, so of course he will always make room for them."³⁴ King Saul was unable do this when David arrived on the scene. Don't be like him. Be like Barnabas, who saw the potential of the recent convert Saul of Tarsus and talked the others into giving him a chance. He was secure enough to make room for Paul. One of the reasons we have an apostle Paul in the history of the church is because there was a less-visible Barnabas championing him. Patrick Fiorenza reminds us that "Everybody needs cheerleaders like this - those who have mastered reflective listening, and understand your perspectives to help guide you through your challenges."³⁵

A Team Player

God's plan has always been for us to lead in team. He never intended us to lead on our own. Even the most gifted can't do it all by themselves. "You're going to wear yourself out,"

³³ Loren Cunningham, personal conversation, Kona, HI, June 17, 2015.

³⁴ Sean Lambert, personal conversation, Kona, HI, June 16, 2015.

³⁵ Patrick Fiorenza, "3 Leadership Roles: The Coach, the Cheerleader, the Critic," accessed June 2015, www.govloop.com/3-leadership-roles-the-coach-the-cheerleader-and-the-critic.

Jethro told Moses, “this job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself” (Ex 18:18 NLT). What great wisdom; thankfully, Moses heeded his advice. A good leader sees the need for others to come alongside to accomplish great things together. Paul recruited Silas and Timothy to join him (Acts 16:1-6 NIV), David had his mighty men (2 Sm 23:8), and even Jesus gathered a team around him (Lk 8:1-3 NLT). Jim Collins said: “People want to be part of a winning team.”³⁶ And as Joy Dawson notes, that’s how the New Testament describes the church: “a unified body that is multifaceted and symbiotic, where everybody is functioning in their respective ministry gifts.”³⁷ Patrick Lencioni calls teamwork “the ultimate competitive advantage in any endeavor - more than finances, more than strategy, and more than technology . . . If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time.”³⁸

People Skills

Theodore Roosevelt reportedly said, “The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”³⁹ Relating well to others is an absolute necessity for any good leader. One can have people skills and not be a good leader, but a person cannot be a good leader without people skills. As followers of Jesus it’s even more important. When asked to identify the most important commandment Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” And then he said “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 12:30-31 NIV). Treat others the way you want to be treated and people feel valued and motivated. This is characteristic of every good leader.

John Maxwell argues that relational leadership has three people-skill components that touch head, hand, and heart.⁴⁰ You must have a leader’s head – seek to *understand* people. A good leader will discern where a person is at, and meet them there. You must have a leader’s hand – seek to *help* people. Everyone respects a leader who keeps their interests in mind. If your focus is on what you can put into people rather than what you can get out of them, they will love you and respect you for it. You must have a leader’s heart – seek to *love* people: Henry Gruland captured this idea when he said, “Being a leader is more than just wanting to lead. Leaders have empathy for others and a keen ability to find the best in people.”⁴¹

One Who Creates a Family Environment

The communities in the Book of Acts were prototypes intended to be replicated throughout the world, but it’s hard to replicate something you know little about. The dynamics of community life must be experienced first-hand. When a team is ready to be sent out, the principles and practices of living together should be second nature to them. It’s not a perfect science - communities are just a reflection of the people that built them, and people are not perfect - but community is the way God intended his church to multiply. The relational harmony forged in a community is readily duplicated by those who have experienced it personally. It’s a beautiful thing when done correctly. It’s God’s template for strong and healthy multiplication.

³⁶ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 177.

³⁷ Joy Dawson, *All Heaven Will Break Loose* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2014), 46.

³⁸ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), vii.

³⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/8974/>

⁴⁰ John Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (Nashville: HarperCollins, 2007), 81-85.

⁴¹ John Maxwell, *Leadership Promises for your Week* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 139.

King David said in Psalm 68:6 (NIV) that God sets the lonely in families. David experienced this personally when he was rejected by his own family (1 Sm 16:10-12 NIV). It is incredible to think about how David must have felt on the day Samuel came over: even David's own dad had no ambition for him to be king, yet David didn't let that keep him from becoming one of the most relational, inclusive leaders in the Bible. Building a place for people to call home is even more crucial in our day. This fatherless generation is desperate to be re-parented - someone has to make it happen if their potential is to be unlocked. Following are three keys to creating communities that are safe places for up-and-coming leaders to thrive.

Starting with the end in mind. You must design your community the way you want it to be before you get started. YWAM centers have a tendency to become a catchall for anyone who has completed the minimum requirement of a Discipleship Training School somewhere around the world. If you don't have clearly defined standards in place your community culture will be shaped by the strongest and most vocal people in your midst. My wife calls this community *by default* rather than community *by design*. Implicational thinking is essential for a pioneering leader. It's what Stephen Covey calls, "starting with the end in mind."⁴²

Maintaining the presence of parental role models. One of the biggest pitfalls I've observed in YWAM is that communities often begin in a healthy manner, but then, over time, see fewer and fewer father and mother figures on site. We frequently use the term *family*, but easily forget the implications of our imagery. Without these role models, young people can feel more like orphans than valued members of a family. When leaders get too busy to be actively engaged on a day-to-day basis, the community suffers. Loren Cunningham said it like this: "If we don't have *family* in place everything else will crumble."⁴³ One of the ways we've addressed this in Denver is by allowing all staff to eat at the base for free. Our community is abuzz with families and children eating alongside our single population at lunch and dinner. It's fantastic.

In an impassioned speech to a group of leaders recently Lynn Green urged the following: "Could we consider that our first calling is to be a safe place for others to come home to? Could we consider that our first calling as YWAM leaders is to be fathers and mothers?"⁴⁴ The need for parental role models has never been greater in our mission. If we are truly on the cusp of a fresh wave of young people coming into our midst, we cannot neglect this.

Retaining long-term workers. One of the greatest challenges we face is the transiency of our staff population. An unfortunate outcome of this trend is a reticence on behalf of long-termers to build deep and meaningful relationships. To address transiency in YWAM we must understand our historical context. We live with tremendous technological advances in transportation. People move quickly and effortlessly across the globe for a fraction of what it used to cost. Family breakdown also contributes to a restlessness among many. Additionally, the short-term mentality is perhaps inherent in a volunteer youth movement that does not pay salaries. It is not uncommon for a young person to make a staff commitment and then leave within a year for another opportunity. Building community in this climate takes work.

⁴² Stephen R. Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 2013.

⁴³ Loren Cunningham, personal conversation, Kona, HI, June 17, 2015.

⁴⁴ Lynn Green, personal conversation, Kona, HI, June 17, 2015.

Practical Application in YWAM Denver

It is the responsibility of spiritual leaders to champion the emerging leaders in their midst. To champion someone does not simply mean you cheer them on from the sidelines without any vested interest in who they are or what they will become. To *champion* means to place someone in a position to win. It requires time and personal investment on your behalf. It's allowing them to stand on your shoulders so that if at all possible, they will one day exceed what you have accomplished. In athletic competition a champion is a winner, but winners are not made on the day of the race. Champions are formed in the grueling weeks and months leading up to the competition. A chance to win the prize demands 100 percent commitment. It's like they say, "it's what you go through to get there that qualifies you to be there." Following are four strategies we have put in place to raise up champions from our ministry in Denver.

School of Ministry Development

Linda and I had the privilege of leading a large YWAM center prior to coming to Colorado, an invaluable apprenticeship for starting our own ministry. The base had 150 staff spread out over an 80-mile radius in six different ministry locations. The needs were very great and there was always a push by the site leaders to recruit new staff workers - and that was the crux of the problem. The five-month Discipleship Training School (DTS) was the sole prerequisite for coming on staff; as soon as someone graduated they were snatched up to serve in one of the locations. Most of them weren't ready. It wasn't so much a character issue as a lack of the necessary tools to do the job effectively. Their DTS was focused primarily on spiritual growth and relationship with God, but did little to equip them with the ministry skills they would need to lead others. The result was that their growth curve was gradual and their leadership development often came at the expense of those they were attempting to lead.

When we came to Denver, we decided to create a post-DTS program that would equip staff for ministry. If DTS instilled godly character in them, this school would equip them to effectively pass on that experience to others. How to be a friend and a leader at the same time, principles for effective support raising, leading a small group and speaking in public - these, and many more subjects were part of the curriculum. And then we made it a requirement for everybody coming on staff. People told us it would never work and potentially have the reverse effect discouraging people from joining us because of the added time and expense tacked on after their DTS. We found the opposite to be true. Young leaders were grateful that we wanted to invest in them. We can attest today, 30 years on, that this program, designed specifically to champion young leaders, has been a phenomenal success. Several other YWAM bases have since adopted the School of Ministry Development (SOMD) model. Not only has the program served to equip our whole staff, but it has also provided a starting point for up-and-coming leaders who will one day lead ministries of their own.

Timothy Team

Once young leaders have been on our staff for two years we invite them to join the Timothy Team. This group meets in our living room once a month for two-and-a-half to three hours to discuss the topic of leadership. The idea originally came to me as I was meditating on

the way the apostle Paul invested in his young protégé, Timothy, and the extraordinary results that came from their partnership (Acts 16:2-5 NIV). This passage tells us that Timothy had a good reputation: he was well spoken of (verse 2). The next verse tells us that Paul had ambition for him: “Paul wanted to take him along on the journey.” It tells us that together they served the church leaders by communicating on their behalf: “they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey” (verse 4). Finally, the passage also tells us that the result was spiritual and numerical growth in the body of Christ: “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (Acts 16:5 NIV).

Reflections on Leadership

Several years ago we developed a six to eight week program for emerging leaders in our midst. I meet with them personally once a week to discuss principles from a leadership publication we’re reading together. Everyone is asked to post an 800 word essay online for the others to read. When we come together at the end of the week we reflect on significant leadership principles we’ve observed, their biblical relevance and how we can apply them to our lives as leaders. It’s been a significant investment in next-generation leaders.

Personal Investment

By far the greatest contribution I’ve made in the lives of our leaders has been in the form of personal time spent with them. I’ve made it a point through the years to take different guys along with me on trips. It’s been on these journeys, and especially during the down times over lunch, coffee, or a round of golf that the greatest gains in leadership development have been made. I’ve been able to be open about my own shortcomings and the challenges I face as a leader. I would venture to say that this one thing, the personal investment, has been more effective than every other strategy I’ve implemented to champion our emerging leaders.

Conclusion

We are on the brink of a new day of opportunity in Youth With A Mission, but it won’t be all God intends it to be unless the Pauls in our midst run in stride with the growing tide of up-and-coming Timothys. There’s a transitional stage in every relay race when two athletes run side by side. This is the crucial point of the race: if the baton is mishandled or dropped here it wipes out everything everyone worked so hard to achieve. I believe YWAM is at this critical stage. Winning or losing depends on how we handle these next few years. The emerging generation desperately wants fathers and mothers to run in stride with them. They need those who will teach them, love them, and, when the time comes, hand them the baton. If we can run together like this, then, like Jesus’ disciples in John 14:12, the emerging generation will be positioned to go further than we have gone, accomplish more than we have accomplished, and do greater works than we have done. Let’s invest in them today that they would become the champions of tomorrow.

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