

Why We Are Encouraging the Master's Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship

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1. My Personal Story (Background)

A. First heard of G-12 about 10+ years ago.

--I reacted negatively: 1st Impression, Pentecostal & Authoritarian

B. Became DS January of 2001

--Vision to help every Anglo congregation establish a Spanish ministry/newstart.

--Prayer: Laborers for the Harvest

C. Heard Dr. Jerry Porter speak of the Cali, Colombia Church at Anaheim District Assembly, Spring of 2005.

--I shared the story with my Hispanic Coordinator, Joel Guerra. He said, "Let's get Pastor Adalberto to come to Southern California to help us plant churches."

D. Joel arranged for me to have lunch with Adalberto at General Assembly.

--We invited him to pray about coming to Southern California. He said, you come see what is happening at Cali and then we will talk.

E. Joel and I spent one week at Cali Church in August of 2005.

--This was a watershed moment for me when I learned that the Cali church was doing G-12 (*Master's Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship*.) I will come back to this later.

--While there, Joel and I preached in all of their services. We asked the church to adopt the Southern California District as their world mission field; to pray for us and to send us missionaries.

F. The Herreras came to our district in October of '05 to lead our Pastors' & Spouses' Retreat.

--Adalberto told us about their plan to have 15,000 people on a special outreach Sunday in December. I got up and said, "I want to be there for that day." It was an off the cuff remark, but several pastors immediately came to me and asked if they could go with me. In six weeks, we were in Cali with a group of 13, pastors from our district and Craig Rensch (Anaheim).

--The most impressive things about the Cali church is intercessory prayer, evangelism, discipleship and the training and mobilization of leaders.

G. The Herreras returned to our district in March '06 to conduct an "Encounter" for pastors and spouses.

--We had 75 attend from four districts.

H. Current Southern California District Picture

- Seven established churches implementing The Master's Plan.
- Four New Starts being launched with The Master's Plan.
- Cali Church has sent us two missionary couples with another couple in the process.

II. Compelling Elements of the Master's Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship

A. The basic structure/system embodies the Great Commission.

--It is a comprehensive system that is, interestingly enough, in line with the Wesleyan "Order of Salvation." By far the majority of our churches lack a comprehensive "system" for evangelism and disciple making (reproducing leaders).

1. Win
2. Consolidate
3. Disciple/Teach
4. Send

B. The placement and purpose of the Encounter is strategic.

--In the Church of the Nazarene, we have by in large lost the revival meeting and camp meeting, the places where holiness was taught and experienced in a focused setting. The Encounter restores this much needed opportunity for teaching and call to consecration and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

C. The function of "open" and "closed" groups.

1. On my first visit to Cali it dawned upon me that what they were doing was in fact what John Wesley did with "classes," "bands," and "select societies."
2. Open group: ("cell" in G-12 system) for seekers: evangelism, spiritual nurture and assimilation ("consolidation").
3. Closed Group: G-12 group for leadership training and reproduction. Each leader is to be in someone's G-12 group and after a certain point in his/her training they are to start developing their own G-12 group.
4. D. Michael Henderson's book, *A Model For Making Disciples, John Wesley's Class Meeting*.

--Providentially, I had just completed reading this book before visiting Cali in August of '05. I was impacted by the commonalities between the Master's Plan and Wesley's System. Some have been reticent to consider G-12, The Master's Plan, because they consider it to be primarily a Pentecostal "thing". In reality it is almost an exact reproduction of Wesley's method. Wesley believed that his followers, who were seeking holiness, must be faithful in class and band meetings. This is what he meant by "social holiness." Let's reclaim our heritage, in message and method.

III. A closer look at Wesley's system. . .

--Ref. Henderson, Chapter 3: "Wesley's System of Interlocking Groups"
 --Wesley's system was largely in place by 1743 and continued in its effectiveness for over fifty years. After his death certain critical elements diminished.

A. The "Society"

1. Operated much like a congregation. However, membership in the Society was conditioned upon a person's consistent attendance to "Class" (Ticket System), and a demonstration of "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." Functions at Society were teaching (lecture for knowledge) and worship. The Foundery ("United Society") in London became the primary model.
2. "The primary function of the society was cognitive instruction; it was the educational channel by which the tenets of Methodism were presented to the target population." (Henderson, p. 84.)
3. "Members of the Society could be in disagreement with the leadership and also be struggling with serious moral problems and still be welcome participants. But, they could not remain in the Society if their behavior threatened the cohesion of the group or blocked its normal functions." (Henderson, p. 79)

B. The "Class"

1. Began as a fund raising program. Each of the leaders of the society would gather together eleven members of the society each week and collect a penny. If a member was too poor to give a penny, others would put a penny in for him. The leader would make a "particular inquiry into the behavior of those whom he saw weekly." (Henderson, p. 95)
2. In time, "every Methodist became a member of a class and attended it regularly—or else he or she was no longer a member of the society." (p. 95)
3. The class was to be an intimate group of ten or twelve people who met weekly for personal supervision of their spiritual growth. (p. 95)
4. The society served a "cognitive" function, whereas the class was a tool for the alteration of behavior. The "Rules" specified the basic process as "inquiry" and the subject matter as "how their souls prospered." "The class meeting incorporated into the lives of its members what had been taught in the society meetings." (Henderson, p. 107)
5. Three categories of rules: (1) things to avoid, (2) positive things to pursue, (3) helpful practices to be maintained, which were known as the "means of grace."
6. Class membership marked by heterogeneous make up: gender, age, social standing, and spiritual maturity. Organized on the basis of geographical proximity.
7. The "class" functioned as an "open" group with a qualification. Visitors could attend "class" twice before deciding to join. They were not allowed to continue without some basic commitment to the group and to the process. This protected the intimacy of the group and helped increase the commitment level.

8. Personal religious experience was the primary topic of discussion.
9. Lead by a peer who was chosen and appointed by the leader of the Society. The leader acted as a “sub-pastor”. In Methodism this position was the “first rung” of leadership. (Same with The Master’s Plan) This position did not require a great amount of training. However, the leader must exhibit faithfulness, honesty, and concern for people.
10. Henderson: “Anyone who demonstrated these qualities as a class leader could rise to higher levels of leadership, but without them it was impossible to be a Methodist leader, no matter how educated or wealthy or talented.” (P. 101)
11. This is also true of the “Master’s Plan” system. This is a very practical answer to the “Empowering Leadership” deficiency of the typical Nazarene congregation. (See “Natural Church Development”)
12. Itemized summary of the role of the Classes on pp. 110-112 of Henderson.

C. The “Band”

1. “The bands were voluntary cells of people who profess a clear Christian commitment and who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of intention.” (Henderson, p. 112)
2. “In the Methodist system, the society meetings aimed at cognitive instruction (preaching and teaching), the class meeting provided an environment for behavioral change, and the band facilitated affective redirection.” (Henderson, p. 112)
3. The primary methodology of the band was “close conversation,” soul searching examination, not so much of behavior and ideas but of motives and heartfelt impressions. (Similar to Wesley’s Holy Club endeavors)
4. Operated as a “closed” group; high commitment and high accountability. No visitors allowed due to the sensitivity of the “close conversation.” Potential members of the band were required to apply, go through screening and be recommended by members of the group who already knew them.
5. Wesley started with the band as his primary small group mode. By 1742 he developed the class as the primary entry level, leaving the band at an intermediate level. (Henderson, p. 115)
6. Holiness was the focus of both the classes and the bands, the classes focused on the holiness lifestyle (behavioral) and the bands focused on “inward purity” and “perfect love” (affective).
7. Wesley’s methodology was an “interlocking system,” built on a central focus and priority. “Each component depended on the others, and working together to accomplish different facets of the stated goal.” (Henderson, p. 115)
8. The dynamics of the band, a closed group with high commitment and high accountability, are synonymous with the G-12 group.

D. The “Select Society”

1. “In the early years of Methodism, the uppermost group in the instructional hierarchy was the select society. As its name suggests, it was a ‘select’ company of men and women whom Wesley had hand-picked from among the most faithful Methodists. The purpose of this group was to model or exemplify what Methodism was all about, and it was to provide a training experience in the doctrines and methods of Methodism.” (Henderson, p. 121)

--Excerpt from Wesley’s *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (1742):
 “I saw it might be useful to give some advices to all those who continued in the light of God’s countenance, which the rest of the brethren did not want, and probably could not receive. So I desired a small number of such as appeared to be in this state, to spend an hour with me every Monday morning. My design was, not only to direct them how to press after perfection; to exercise their every grace, and improve every talent they had received; and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other; but also to have a select company, to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions, without reserve; and whom I could propose to all their brethren as a pattern of love, of holiness, and of good works.” (Henderson, p. 122)

2. The members of the select society were individuals who had proven themselves not only by participation in all other levels of Methodism but were demonstrating leadership at those levels, society, class and band.

3. “This highest mode of the hierarchy was intended to be the capstone of their training experience, so that the membership of the select society provided a constant pool of available and ready leadership for top positions in the system.” (Henderson, p. 123) This characteristic is one of the most impressive aspects of a church utilizing the Master’s Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship (G-12). The strength of the lay ministry at Cali Church of the Nazarene is readily apparent.

4. The select society “ran” Methodism. “Wesley encouraged a freewheeling and open discussion, especially on matters of significance to the direction and policies of Methodism. He welcomed criticism of the system and of his own place in it. He made it clear that in this context, the participants would hammer out strategy for the societies and have a major voice in the decision making process.” (Henderson, p. 123) This was a kind of “on the job” leadership training experience for the participants.

5. While visiting Cali Church I was privileged to sit in with Pastor Adalberto’s meeting of his “twelve.” I would describe the character of that meeting as exactly the same as how Wesley utilized his select society.

--Also see bottom of page 124. (Henderson)

6. One of Wesley’s key concepts was that “The primary function of spiritual/educational leadership is to equip others to lead and minister, not to perform the ministry personally.” (Henderson, p. 129)

7. The select societies failed to continue after Wesley’s death. Was this the beginning of the eventual fragmentation of the bands and the classes?

E. “Penitent Bands”

--Groups designed specifically for people struggling to overcome their personal problems and addictions. Functioned very similar to contemporary recovery groups, “12 step” groups, etc.

Concluding Thoughts regarding why we are encouraging the Master’s Plan: It is. . .

1. The method modeled by Jesus Himself when he selected twelve, disciplined them, empowered them and sent them to fulfill the Great Commission.
2. The method that was at the heart of Wesley’s genius as a revivalist and reformer, who was instrumental in sustaining a spiritual awakening that endured fifty years of his lifetime and beyond.
--While we have retained the outline of his holiness message, we have, by in large lost any resemblance of the methods of Wesley. What might happen if the Church of the Nazarene rediscovered and implemented the strategy that Wesley and others credited for the strength of his movement?
3. When understood and implemented properly, the Master’s Plan (G-12) system provides the most comprehensive and complete strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission today. A dying church can be refocused and revived through intercessory prayer and this strategy. Don’t miss Dave Rhone’s workshop to follow.
4. It embodies Eph. 4:11-12 and makes *Equipping the saints for ministry* more than a motto.
5. God is blessing it.