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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

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AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR AN INCREASINGLY  
DIVERSE GENERATION IN VICTORY OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL

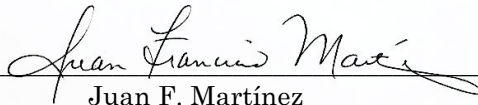
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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

  
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AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR AN INCREASINGLY  
DIVERSE GENERATION IN VICTORY OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

DAVID R. CASTRO  
DECEMBER 2016



## ABSTRACT

### **Intentional Discipleship Strategy for an Increasingly Diverse Generation in Victory Outreach International**

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2016

The goal of this ministry project is to develop an intentional discipleship strategy for Victory Outreach International (VOI) that can transmit specific principles, values, and ministry practices and enable transgenerational progression of a common vision within a changing reality. This involves a missionally grounded strategy that can bridge generational gaps and cultures. It means identifying values and principles that have contributed to VOI's growth as a ministry to gangs and addicts and understanding how the convergence of generations has enabled VOI to become an international multicultural ministry.

Part One presents the uniqueness of VOI. It studies the beginning of VOI, its strengths and weaknesses, and the sources that have contributed to its growth and deficiencies. Appreciative Inquiry is considered for use among the generations to understand the past. Analyzing how VOI's ministry context has broadened helps in understanding new challenges and innovations within postmodern contexts.

Part Two engages in relevant biblical and theological exploration. It examines VOI ecclesiology and the main tenets of VOI adherents and foundations that support and detract from the ministry initiative. VOI is based on a Pentecostal perspective that originated from the Assemblies of God.

Part Three creates a model of intentional discipleship that links VOI's DNA, biblical and theological framework, and issues being raised by newer generations in light of the concerns of elders. The goal is developing a discipleship strategy that enables the transmission of VOI's vision to emerging leadership. The pilot strategy is implemented with discipleship groups within the Victory Outreach Church of Riverside. Each group consists of leaders with specialized gifting, skills, and capacity to form a healthy cell that can reproduce and assimilate people into the life of the church and ultimately throughout the region, to become a model across various cultures.

Content Reader: Juan F. Martínez, PhD

Words: 291

Dedicated to Pastor Sonny and Sister Julie Arguinzoni, the Elders, Ed Morales, David Martínez, and Steve Piñeda, who encouraged me to pursue the academic vision

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I would like to thank Victory Outreach International, the Inland Empire Region, and especially Victory Outreach Riverside for your valuable contribution to this project. I appreciate your unwavering commitment to understand and contribute to my academic progress in fulfilling one of my many dreams. Thank you, Pastor Sonny and Sister Julie, for sharing your rich family history in making this project historically rich; Pastor Saul García, for listening to my ideas; and also Pastor Mitchell Peterson and Sister Debbie Arguinzoni Zegers, for understanding from a corporate perspective and allowing me the time for this project; Lisa Marie Sandoval, for being my creative consultant and editor; and last but not least, my beautiful wife Sonia, for being patient and allowing me to study, research, and write this paper. I cannot forget my beautiful Leilani and grandson Kavi nor my sons and daughters whom I truly love: Albie, Robbie, Daniel, Rafael, Yvonne, and Adelita (Tweedy). I hope that someday you will read the work of your father.

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## INTRODUCTION

The challenge that Victory Outreach International (VOI) is facing at this present time is the transitioning of new leadership. VOI started in the turmoil of the sixties, when young people of the United States were confused and searching for identity and purpose in life. They were protesting and demonstrating their ideologies on campuses and in communities throughout the nation.<sup>1</sup> In 1967, in the black ghettos of the country came the greatest urban riots of American history.<sup>2</sup>

It was at this time that a young country preacher from the grassy hills of Pennsylvania heard the call of God after reading a copy of *Life Magazine* and seeing a picture of seven teenage boys on trial for murder. As he looked at their desperate faces, a sudden conviction possessed him that he must go to New York City—where he had never set foot—to help these young teenagers. The Reverend David Wilkerson was the man who heard the cry of the inner city in reaching out to these abandoned youth.<sup>3</sup>

Rev. Wilkerson opened a center and called it “Teen Challenge,”<sup>4</sup> where Nicky Cruz and Sonny Arguinzoni were converted and became the first group of Rev. Wilkerson’s disciples in helping other youth from the same background and lifestyle. Cruz, a gang warlord from the notorious gang named the Mau-Mau’s, accepted the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Roark et al., *The American Promise: A History of the United States*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 750.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States: 1492–Present* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 459.

<sup>3</sup> David Wilkerson with John Sherrill and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen books, 1963), 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

Jesus and later brought Arguinzoni into the fold as the first drug addict to be transformed to Christ through the ministry of Teen Challenge.<sup>5</sup> Like other heroin addicts, he was desperately lost and without hope in his life.<sup>6</sup>

Arguinzoni later graduated from Teen Challenge and was sent to the Latin American Bible Institute (LABI) in California, where he established himself in the Word of God and also met his wife, Julie Rivera.<sup>7</sup> He then started reaching out into the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles, and families began to be converted. This is how Victory Outreach International started forty-nine years ago.<sup>8</sup> Now the children of Arguinzoni's generation have grown and become part of this ministry, which has spread all over the world. As founding pastors, Arguinzoni and his wife are at the helm of VOI accompanied by chosen elders in leading and guiding this ministry into the future. I am a regional pastor who works closely with the multi-regional overseers and the elders.

Besides working closely with Arguinzoni, I help to lead VOI in other key ways. I serve as regional pastor of the Inland Empire Region and oversee five churches, including the congregation I pastor in Riverside, California. From 1992 through 2010, I also served as the

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<sup>5</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, *Sonny: An Exciting True Story* (San Dimas, CA: Vision Multimedia, 2002), 60. This book was released originally as Sonny Arguinzoni, *God's Junkie* (Paramaribo, SR: Logos International, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Spencer and Nadja Popovich, "The Mind of a Heroin Addict: The Struggle to Get Clean and Stay Sober," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/interactive/2014/feb/11/heroin-addiction-recovery-readers-response-interactive> (accessed October 28, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 92-93.

<sup>8</sup> Victory Outreach International, "The History," under "Vision," <http://victoryoutreach.org/vision/our-history/> (accessed October 10, 2016).

executive international director of Victory Education Training Institute (VETI),<sup>9</sup> an academic institution that helps leaders become biblically proficient and sound teachers of God’s Word.

The reason this ministry paper is so important is because the future of VOI is at a crossroads in its destiny, and new leadership is emerging. Victory Outreach now must transmit its principles and values to the next generation, many of whom have been raised in VOI. I have been part of the ministry for thirty-eight years. I began as a faithful member in pionering the Riverside church in 1980. Then in 1986, I was sent to plant a church in Hawaii, where I stayed for over two years before leaving to help the church-planting team in Amsterdam for five years. Having spent over a decade in my current role as pastor and overseer, I am observing that yesterday’s methods of reaching our youth through evangelism are not as effective as they were back in the early days. Today VOI congregants are not exclusively emerging from gangs and drug havens. There are a variety of lifestyles and different cultures in VOI neighborhoods, and now there is a need for social networking—a dynamic we never had in the sixties and through the nineties.

Advancements in technology and rapid social change on a global scale now affect congregational ministry in today’s postmodern world.<sup>10</sup> Still, it is essential and critical for VOI’s emerging leadership to sojourn with the same empathy and passion of the

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<sup>9</sup> Victory Outreach International, “About VETI,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/veti/about-veti/> (accessed October 10, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downer’s, Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 35.

founding father and the hereditary characteristics that God birthed for VOI in 1967.<sup>11</sup> In *LeadershipNext*, Eddie Gibbs writes:

It is evident in these rapidly changing times that knowledge does not necessarily flow from experience, as information now is accessible to anyone at any time through the Internet. Yesterday's solutions and procedures in doing ministry may not provide an adequate or appropriate response to present challenges. Therefore, the biggest hurdles that face today's pioneering leaders are in learning new insights and skills as well as unlearning what has been viewed as tried and true, which also has provided a false sense of security.<sup>12</sup>

True leadership is not without trial. It requires individuals to step out and take risks, to do things that the average person will not dare to do. This means that the leader must rise to a commitment to embrace “the essence of life and its noble values.”<sup>13</sup> Leaders from a younger generation bring a fresh perspective, while those from the older generation offer insights without temptations to grasp power.<sup>14</sup>

Existing generations need to cooperate with one another more intentionally in order to meet the challenges that face them. There needs to be flexibility and adaptability in order to stay relevant. Today's leaders must recognize the need to respond rapidly to the unexpected.<sup>15</sup> In the VOI context, this requires an all-encompassing posture of leaders based on an attitude of appreciation. This means appreciating both the older generations and the younger ones, merging in unity of faith for the furtherance of the gospel and the

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<sup>11</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 200.

<sup>12</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downer's, Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 35.

<sup>13</sup> John W. Work, “Leading a Diverse Work Force,” in *The Leadership of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, eds. Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 76.

<sup>14</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 36.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

kingdom of God. This will result in leaving an inheritance and a legacy to future generations. VOI will have to learn to do ministry intentionally to see kingdom results in order to bring glory and honor to God. In doing God's perfect will among the generations, even if it may not seem the same as in the past, VOI can reach future believers for God. This requires new thinking and strategies of the young and the old ministering together.

At VOI, we are encountering what most every corporation and institute faces today: bringing change in order to stay on the cutting edge in a world that is full of turbulence and discontinuity.<sup>16</sup> We are in the midst of building "one church with four generations," and that means understanding and reaching congregants of all ages as well as a postmodern society that does not believe in absolutes.<sup>17</sup> Making sense of one another's perspectives in this present time of diversity and chaos can become very complex. In today's post-Christendom, postmodern culture, we need a new kind of leader.<sup>18</sup>

VOI has kept the vision, values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy of the original ministry that has borne much fruit and made us who we are today. The ongoing mandate that VOI has is to proclaim the gospel to the next generation. This means living it out in the midst of a culture that is increasingly postmodern in its thinking.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Warren Wilhem, "Learning from Past Leaders," in *The Leadership of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, eds. Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 222.

<sup>17</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 196.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, "Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernism and the Future of Evangelical Theology," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, ed. David S. Dockey (Grand Rapids, MI: BridgePoint Books, 2001), 83.

Intentional discipleship is essential. It delegates and empowers people, with stability and consistent practice as the key to form strong new disciples.<sup>20</sup> This is what VOI needs, if it wants to see the vision of the Great Commission accomplished. Jesus did not spread Christianity into a worldwide movement; His earthly followers did (Acts 1:8). The principal evidence here is that Jesus could not have accomplished His will without those who came after Him.<sup>21</sup> In a similar way, the members of VOI churches, including those of the younger generation, most likely will be the ones who will complete what Arguinzoni and initial leaders have started.

Some churches in general are becoming secular, influenced by postmodern thought that alters their view of what it means to be the Church.<sup>22</sup> Trying to be relevant and identifying in reaching out to the unchurched sometimes requires a risk of crossing over the sacred grounds of tradition that VOI's founding fathers and mothers have established, and that is what we are very careful not to do. It is important to realize that what got us to be a worldwide ministry will not necessarily be the right method to continue to reach the next generations for the cause of Christ. Just like VOI's founders, contemporary leaders need to comprehend the specific times in which they live. Media, society, education, culture, and politics all contribute to today's social complexity and global mindset.

VOI must take care that it does not compromise absolute biblical truths, as it reaches into postmodern society with the gospel. Postmodern thought does not allow for the

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<sup>20</sup> Joe Wyrostek, *Discipleship Based Churches: How to Create and Maintain a Church of Disciples* (Chicago: MPI Pub., 2012), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 578.

<sup>21</sup> Hanz Finzel, *Empowered Leader: The Ten Principles of Christian Leadership* (Nashville: W. Pub. Group, 1998), 133-134.

<sup>22</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 51.

acceptance of an absolute truth.<sup>23</sup> Some see postmodernism as the enemy of the Church.<sup>24</sup> Others regard it as a savior.<sup>25</sup> Our concern here, however, is not to come to a clear opinion about postmodernism. I simply want to understand its impact on the culture and learn how to speak meaningfully to those under its sway.<sup>26</sup> Since postmodernism comes up short, because its basic presuppositions are antithetical to the gospel at times, VOI cannot “move with the times” and embrace postmodernity without strong discernment.<sup>27</sup>

This is where intentional discipleship plays an essential role in ministry. Present elders, pastors, and lay leaders need to communicate soundly, spiritually, and intellectually to VOI’s future leaders. Leadership is essential, and transmitting absolute biblical truth is needed. Discipleship is intentional, precise, and deliberate. We need to build our ministry on God’s unchanging gospel.

Intentional discipleship involves the legacy that VOI leaves its children. Since the Church is only one generation from extinction, discipleship becomes the challenge of every generation. We must make sure that we retain the passion and compassion for the lost souls of humanity. These are the sobering thoughts that go through the minds of Victory Outreach’s elders and ministry pioneers.

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<sup>23</sup> Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith and How to Bring them Back* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>27</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 113.

VOI has spent forty-nine years trailblazing a frontier that was not known to any church denomination. In the beginning, Victory Outreach was known as the church for drug addicts, and the target group was predominately Mexican Americans living in the low-income neighborhoods of East Los Angeles. Despite criticism and persecution, we kept reaching out to the outcasts of society.<sup>28</sup>

These are the issues surrounding the challenge addressed in this ministry project. Through the process of intentional discipleship we can transmit VOI's values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry purposefully to new generations. David took this approach, as Luke mentions in Acts 13:36: "For David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed."<sup>29</sup> Every generation is responsible for reaching the people around them. There will always be a need for a Savior throughout all generations. We needed Jesus in our lives nearly five decades ago, and people today need Jesus in their unconverted hearts as well. Gibbs says that churches that fail to read and accurately interpret the signs of the times risk a bleak future.<sup>30</sup>

This project of intentional discipleship has had and will continue to face challenges throughout the generations to come. It is just like Abraham, the father of the Judeo-Christian faith, who was told by God to leave his country and family; he did not know where he was going. Genesis 12:1-2 reads: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show

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<sup>28</sup> Victory Outreach International, "The History."

<sup>29</sup> All Scripture has been taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), unless otherwise noted.

<sup>30</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 10.



you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing” (NRSV).<sup>31</sup> As founding pastor of Victory Outreach, Arguinzoni did not know where God was leading him. In reaching out into the segment of society where violence, danger, and crime were an everyday occurrence, he fearlessly walked into the dens of hell, trusting in God. These are the places in the inner city where even “angels fear to tread.”<sup>32</sup> The famous lyrics that Frank Sinatra sang, “Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread, and so I come to you my love, my heart above my head.” Surely Arguinzoni’s heart was above his head, because no one in their right mind would go into the ghettos of the inner city and draw out the junkies, alcoholics, prostitutes, and gang members—people whom no one wanted to love and care for. However, he sought to see God transform them into “treasures out of darkness”<sup>33</sup> and believed they could become church members and respectable citizens of the community.

“Treasures out of Darkness” has been an important phrase Arguinzoni believes he received from God through evangelist Dick Mills.<sup>34</sup> When Arguinzoni was at a point of desperation and discouragement in his ministry, he called out to God. Needing to hear from Him, Arguinzoni felt like giving up in his evangelistic efforts, because in reality he did not know what he was doing and did not understand the ministry that God was giving to him. A church for drug addicts was unheard of and not something traditional churches

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<sup>31</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Frank Sinatra, *Fools Rush In*, performed with Tommy Dorsey, lyrics by Johnny Mercer, music by Rube Bloom, Warner/Chappell Music, 1940.

<sup>33</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni and Julie Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness* (Green Forest, AZ: New Leaf Press, 1991), 132.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

were likely to support. Arguinzoni believed everything would be all right, if only he could hear from God.<sup>35</sup>

Many times, Arguinzoni's faith was weak; and in those moments when his strength and trust seemed to waver, he hungered for a word from the Lord.<sup>36</sup> During this time of waiting, Arguinzoni attended a meeting where he was one of three speakers. He was the second speaker, and he still had not heard from the Lord. As Mills, who was the previous speaker, was about to conclude, Arguinzoni thought to himself, "Lord you have not spoken to me yet." Then Mills said, "I cannot turn it over to the pastor until I give this word. Sonny, I have a word for you from the Lord. Stand up right now."<sup>37</sup> Mills shared Isaiah 45:2-3: "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by name." Then Mills exhorted him to do the following: "Write these verses down, Sonny. Read them again and again; these are words from the Almighty God sent special delivery just for you."<sup>38</sup>

These verses have become the foundational Scripture and promises to Victory Outreach International.<sup>39</sup> Today, all over the world where Victory Outreach churches stand, they are known as "treasures out of darkness" and are filled with ex-drug addicts,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 132.

ex-gangsters, ex-alcoholics, and ex-prostitutes from all ethnic backgrounds, races, and cultures. VOI is in Holland, where the Church speaks and preaches in Dutch. It also is in Spain, Mexico, Central and South America, Germany, and most recently in Cape Town, South Africa and surrounding countries.<sup>40</sup> Although VOI has crossed over into countries that speak other languages, its ethos remains the same.

Such expansion has helped to create a new generation, who was not raised up in the sixties but now faces a different scenario. Those who are actively involved in ministry now confront a global reality. Many of VOI's younger generation grew up in the Body of Christ, and they come with a completely different worldview than those who initially flocked to Victory Outreach. These are our children who were raised within the ministry environment and have little to no experience in gangs, drugs, and the underside of urban life. This is where the challenge is in making disciples, while transmitting the original VOI values and philosophy into their lives. Although not everything has changed in forty-nine years, VOI leaders need to be intentional in understanding the newer things around which we can come into agreement without compromising the vision, values, and philosophy of ministry. In the midst of such progress, "treasures out of darkness" are the type of people group that VOI remains called to reach.

In light of current challenges and concerns facing VOI's founder and elders, it could be that Victory Outreach is going to get an extreme church makeover—so much that one may not be able to recognize it in the future. Still, I suppose that the Apostle Paul

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<sup>40</sup> Victory Outreach International, "Locations," <http://victoryoutreach.org/locations/> (accessed October 10, 2016).

would be amazed if he were able to come and visit the Church of today. He likely would be shocked to see how the Body of Christ is so different from the one of his days.

However, while issues change with time and situations, the fallen human condition is still the same. Since first-century discipleship did not establish a comprehensive list of rules, individual believers need the wisdom and discernment of a community of faith and relationships of mutual accountability.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, VOI leaders need to begin to think in a non-traditional way yet stay connected to the principles that are universal and permanent, which serves as the plumb line throughout generations. Wisdom and discernment are the gifts to covet more in these last days to be effective and adaptive to the present times.

This project focuses on the implementation of transmitting to future generations VOI's values, principles, and philosophy of ministry that were conceived at its beginning. It seeks to enable the next generation of leaders to function with a common vision within a changing reality. Consequently, Part One identifies values and principles that have contributed to VOI's growth as a ministry to gangs and addicts and shows how the convergence of generations has enabled VOI to become an international multicultural ministry. It starts by understanding the primary purpose and nature of Arguinzoni's calling and his obedience, faithfulness, and loyalty to God in stepping out by faith to build a worldwide movement of God.

These biblical principles and values were transmitted to former addicts and gang members, who were loyal to their gangs and habit-forming lifestyles. Together they created a philosophy of ministry that enhances those qualities of loyalty and commitment, only now

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<sup>41</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 42.

directing them towards God. Gangs with a formalized organizational structure have titled leadership roles and clearly defined operating rules for members. In essence, VOI has used their greatest values of loyalty, faithfulness, and family to help establish its theological foundations.<sup>42</sup> VOI has a strong family value that breeds an impenetrable fellowship within its philosophy of doing ministry. This value at times may seem cultist to outsiders, but it comes from grateful hearts that have been forgiven much and transformed by the power of God. Such discussion and other theological influences form the content for Part Two.

Part Three builds on VOI's biblical-theological foundations and springs into the missional arena. With leaders and congregants, I venture into the community context of Victory Outreach Riverside to engage in theological reflection and new initiatives of intentional discipleship that can be reproduced throughout VOI congregations and other communities. This new model of intentional discipleship links Victory Outreach's DNA, biblical and theological framework, and issues being raised by younger generations in light of concerns held by pioneering elders. The goal is to develop and implement a discipleship strategy that enables the transmission of VOI's vision to emerging leadership and an adaptive assessment to evaluate how well VOI's vision is communicated to adapt to meet the needs of new leaders and their specific community context. The pilot strategy is implemented with discipleship groups within Victory Outreach Riverside. Each group consists of leaders with specialized gifts, skills, and capacity to form a healthy cell that can reproduce and assimilate people into church life and ultimately throughout the region, to become a model across various cultures.

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<sup>42</sup> Rick Landre, Mike Miller, and Dee Porter, *GANGS: A Handbook for Community Awareness* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 1997), 15.

PART ONE  
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1  
THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT OF VICTORY OUTREACH  
INTERNATIONAL

Victory Outreach International was birthed in 1967 in a Mexican-American neighborhood called “Boyle Heights,” in East Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup> It was a specially selected group that God had chosen to reach: drug addicts, gang members, prostitutes, alcoholics, and anyone else who could be considered a reject or menace to society. In these environments throughout the world is where all Victory Outreach churches are planted and established. VOI magnetically appeals to marginalized people who come from backgrounds of poverty, illiteracy, gangs, and anti-social behavior. It attracts the unlovable and undesirable, those hidden people of society that some communities even deny having.

**The Selected Target Group: The Promise**

In strategizing outreaches and studying Victory Outreach demographics thoroughly, VOI has come to choose locations that are not typical suburban communities. In contrast, VOI ventures into the ghettos of the inner cities. Leaders and church planters contact local

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Dictionary Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, rev. and expand. ed., s.vv. “Boyle Heights section of East Los Angeles.”

police officers of the city and ask about the highest crime rate areas, and this is where VOI outreach begins. Due to the grace and favor that God has placed upon the ministry, VOI goes to the places where most traditional churches would never go. VOI views such endeavors through the lens of Scripture, which reads: “Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20).

The grace and favor of God have been with VOI in many dangerous environments from the very beginning until even now, although VOI ministers in vastly different parts of the world. In neighborhood parks, streets, and alleys, the dilapidated buildings and houses that become the congregating places are called “shooting galleries,” where drug addicts inject their heroin daily. This is where VOI goes to evangelize. These are the hot spots and fishing pools of evangelism that VOI targets when entering the inner cities in search of “treasures” to bring “out of darkness.”<sup>2</sup> VOI is not interested in the beautiful, historical scenic places every tourist might first go to see. Instead, we search for hardcore gang members, drug pushers, convicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, dysfunctional families, and the rest of the entourage that associates with them.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

The socioeconomic factor among lower-income people originally reached through VOI is not very inviting and promising. Most of the people in VOI’s demographic have social, financial, emotional, and domestic problems in their lives. Victory Outreach learned early in its history that most of the men and women needed to be re-parented. In other words, the basic fundamentals of human responsibility were not natural or ingrained

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<sup>2</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 132.



through family upbringing and therefore had to be taught. This has meant teaching them how to be husbands and wives and how to parent their children in a safe environment.

Their lack of discipline has been the challenge in Victory Outreach's ministry since the beginning and still continues to be one of many in the present day. Although VOI has seen families restored and new believers have achieved their God-given calling, becoming successful and prosperous in many ways, there still seems to be those who struggle throughout life. However, VOI does not give up on them. Rather, it needs to go beyond just dispensing information in a traditional way and look for spiritual formation in their lives that is rooted in Scripture.<sup>3</sup> Spiritual formation that offers transformational change in character and behavior that translates into Christian growth and maturity is why VOI teaches and preaches the gospel of Jesus.

The financial priorities within this select group that VOI reaches seem to be in a constant state of survival. Growing up in a dysfunctional family is the normal scenario that most congregants have experienced. The healthy relational family environment was absent in most, but not all, of them. However, many of their children now are being raised in Christian homes that have Christian values, with some even in middle-class surroundings.<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning most converts came through men and women's centers that were called Victory Outreach Christian Recovery Homes (VOCRH).<sup>5</sup> After finishing their time in the recovery home, converts and new disciples would be gathered to form a new church

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<sup>3</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel D. Arrerola, *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), 185.

<sup>5</sup> Victory Outreach Oxnard, "Recovery Homes," <http://victoryoutreachoxnard.org/christian-recovery-homes.html> (accessed October 12, 2016).

in the area. All the deficiencies of human frailties that come from the inner cities were evident in these congregants. This has been VOI's church-planting model since its first congregational plant in East Los Angeles and continues in the present. Today VOCRH is also known as Inner City Recovery Homes.<sup>6</sup>

The church-planting system was very simple. A proven couple, called of God and confirmed by the church, would sense the calling to venture into a particular city. They would open their home to start making disciples of men and women who wanted to accept Christ in their lives. This is where informal and formal training happened. It was a developmental model of teaching people holistically to come into growth and maturity by seeing spiritual formation in their lives.

Essentially, churches are formed in order to create Christian family for new converts. This new family cultivates a desire to grow, and they begin to absorb Christian values and exercise principles in their lives, which helps to alter their behavior and develop godly habits in their lives. Here is where VOI leaders are able to identify and notice believers' lifestyle patterns, worldviews, and religious attitudes that come directly from family, culture, and the streets of the city. "In one sense," says Oswald Sanders, "life comes largely in making habits and breaking habits, for we are all creatures of habit. It is the essential part of the soul's education."<sup>7</sup>

Through such intentional discipleship, Arguinzoni and Cruz learned their first lessons in Christianity. They applied the truth, godly principles, and values that were

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<sup>6</sup> Victory Outreach Eagle Rock, "Inner City Recovery Homes," <http://www.voeaglerock.org/recovery-homes.html> (accessed October 12, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship: Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 86.

taught to them personally by Rev. Wilkerson. While still in Teen Challenge, Cruz took responsibility for his life and made it his personal business to see Arguinzoni make it in Christ.<sup>8</sup> Prayer, the Word of God, and evangelism were the primary building blocks of their lives.

Arguinzoni and Cruz did not complete their high school education, and the reason I know this is through conversations that I have had with both of them throughout my years of knowing them.<sup>9</sup> However, this did not matter when it came to discipleship and leadership. Many of the people that VOI reaches also lack in education. Many are dropouts from high school or even elementary school, while others have been in state prison mostly all of their lives and have become institutionalized.

### **Victory Outreach Christian Recovery Homes**

One crucial challenge that VOI faces is teaching new believers its work ethic. Traditionally, this has been done through the one-year program at Victory Outreach Christian Recovery Homes. VOCRH instructs them in the basics of Christian doctrine from the perspective of Pentecostalism, along with VOI's vision and values.<sup>10</sup> In the fall of 2015, the name of VOCRH recovery homes was changed to Inner City Recovery Homes, in order to function as a separate entity for liability purposes. After graduating from the program, those who live in the home assimilate into the church and become part of VOI. They learn to serve according to their God-given calling using their spiritual giftedness, talents, skills,

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<sup>8</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 58.

<sup>9</sup> I have personally known S. Arguinzoni and Cruz for more than thirty-seven years.

<sup>10</sup> Further details about this can be found in Part Two of this project.

and desires. Some of them go into full-time ministry, while others become solid role models and lay leaders in their congregations and community.

The VOCRH foundation was patterned after the Teen Challenge Center of Brooklyn, New York.<sup>11</sup> Arguinzoni and Cruz played a great part in operating the center and learned all the essentials of instilling a Christlike atmosphere, so when new converts would arrive they could feel the love and acceptance of God. Arguinzoni brought this with him from New York, and his wife co-led a team with him to assist Don Hall in opening the first Teen Challenge in Los Angeles.<sup>12</sup> This was their precursor step to venturing out by faith and starting Victory Outreach Ministries.<sup>13</sup>

The success that Teen Challenge had in Brooklyn was happening also in Los Angeles. Even the secular world became curious about how such miraculous success in the inner cities was possible. In 1973, in Brooklyn, the United States Federal Government studied the difference in the success rate in secular recovery homes versus the faith-based program of Teen Challenge. The cure rate of drug addiction in Teen Challenge was 70 percent, while the percentage in their secular programs was at most 15 percent of graduates. Teen Challenge drew further interest, so the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part

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<sup>11</sup> Teen Challenge, Inc.: The Original Teen Challenge, Brooklyn NY, “History of Teen Challenge,” <http://www.teenchallengebrooklyn.com/history.html> (accessed October 12, 2016); see also Teen Challenge USA, “Discipleship,” <https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/about/discipleship> (accessed October 12, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, funded the first year of monitoring and evaluating the results of the Teen Challenge Program in Brooklyn.<sup>14</sup>

These studies entailed monitoring the students who graduated in 1968, entered the Brooklyn Teen Challenge Center, and transferred to the farm in Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania for further training to finish their one-year term. The Center in Brooklyn acted as an induction center, where they could detox from the drugs and life-controlling lifestyles. Once they graduated, researchers followed up seven years later and looked for six characteristics around which they could gauge graduates' success: living drug free, no involvement with the law, achieving employment or enrollment in academia, belonging to a family unit, actively involved in a church, and being physically and mentally healthy.<sup>15</sup>

The survey was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Catherine Hess, who had previously served as the medical director for the New York Hospital Methadone Clinic. This study was to demonstrate that the introduction of a religious component into the treatment of drug addicts is the one aspect that produces the large success rate. The religious component used in Teen Challenge and VOCRH is "The Jesus Factor." Teen Challenge Center and Victory Outreach Homes are not the program; rather, Jesus as the deliverer of humanity is the program.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Teen Challenge International: Wisconsin, "National Institute on Drug Abuse Report," <http://www.teenchallengeonline.com/about-us/how-successful-is-teen-challenge/national-institute-on-drug-abuse-report> (accessed October 12, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> David Manuel, *The Jesus Factor* (Phnom Penh, KH: Logos International, 1977), 171. See also Teen Challenge USA, *Teen Challenge's Proven Answer to the Drug Problem: A Review of a Study by Dr. Aaron T. Bicknese "The Teen Challenge Drug Treatment Program in Comparative Perspective,"* [https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/1999\\_NW\\_review.pdf](https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/1999_NW_review.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2013).

Many VOI elders, pastors, evangelists, and ministers are graduates of VOCRH. Due to much success observed throughout the past forty-nine years in men and women of VOCRH, we place much value in them and the local church fully supports their leadership in spirit and financially. The director and staff teach the work ethic to the residents in the first nine months of the program. This work ethic is defined as a work therapy that begins to show and teach men and women the value and responsibilities of working and providing for themselves and their family. This is important, because some never have worked a day in their lives.<sup>17</sup> Training in VOI's work ethic and spiritual disciplines happens through personal devotion, Bible studies, house chores, evangelism, and personal and group counseling. The fourth phase of the program is when VOCRH participants start looking for jobs and are assimilated into the life of the church to learn how to serve. These fourth-phase residents are in a re-entry stage and pay rent to the home and begin to learn responsibilities to prepare them for their future. There is never any financial charge for residents who want to come into the program to change their lives, within the first nine months.

### **Blending Generations**

Today is not like it was yesterday. While Victory Outreach still operates VOCRH, the needs of congregants are different among newer generations. Today the majority of VOI's young people have been raised in Victory Outreach churches, by the pioneers of yesterday. They have not experienced the urban drug scene. They have not been raised in a drug-addict household or gang-affiliated family and seem to generally exhibit more

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<sup>17</sup> Victory Outreach International, *Christian Recovery Homes Manual*, <https://secure.myvoi.org/center/resources/VOCRH%20Manual%20-%202012.pdf> (accessed October 12, 2016), 39.

stable emotional health, due to their non-involvement in substance abuse. Within the VOI context, younger congregants are referred to as “G.A.N.G.” or “God’s Anointed Now Generation.”<sup>18</sup> Thom S. Rainer would call these the “X” and “Y” generations. Generation X is often known as Busters, those born between 1965 and 1976, after the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964); these are followed by Generation Y, also known as Bridgers, born between 1976 and 2000.<sup>19</sup> VOI still ministers to hardcore drug addicts, gang members, alcoholics, prostitutes—and likely will always reach out to these types of people—but the culture and times are rapidly changing, and younger Christians at Victory Outreach have experienced life beyond their families and neighborhoods.

Whether coming from VOCRH or raised in a VOI church, the younger generation is more open to broader ideas from outside their neighborhood and are influenced by other independent entities. They tend to be easily impressed by media, music, and cultural phenomena, and materialism.<sup>20</sup> This is because postmodern thoughts and attitudes are interwoven into the very fiber of society. They begin to intrude very subtly through online images, culture, terminologies, and attitudes. The present concern is that VOI’s philosophy of ministry may begin to shift away from its original boundary landmarks and biblical establishment by founding fathers and mothers, if leadership does not remain conscious of it.

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<sup>18</sup> Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (Columbia, NY: University Press, 2003), 145-147.

<sup>19</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *The Bridgers Generation: America’s Second Largest Generation, What They Believe, How to Reach Them* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 3-6.

<sup>20</sup> Richard W. Flory and Donald E. Miller, *Gen X Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6-7.

Men and women who enter VOI homes and churches today are coming in with different needs than those from the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties. Lately, heroin and methamphetamines have become an epidemic with today's young people; and disorientated sexual preferences and gender identity seem not to raise an eyebrow anymore. Residents are no longer withdrawing from heroin as much but from methamphetamines. Such drugs have deep psychological effects and require another type of treatment and spiritual care, which is more critical and dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Bi-polar disorder is very common in VOI homes today—along with homosexuality, lesbianism, and even transgender situations that we have encountered in Amsterdam, Holland.<sup>22</sup>

Religious attitudes are changing towards the absolute truths of the Bible and are influenced by media, music, and movies. Even among Christians, the attitude tends to surface as a question: “What is wrong with gays and their lifestyles? They are not hurting anyone.” Tolerance becomes the unspoken answer, when truth is not proclaimed. Ethnic diversity even is influencing the gangs of today. There is now “a rainbow of gangs” that allow all ethnic groups to join and even the opposite sex.<sup>23</sup> While gangs have their own unique culture, they are still subject to the influences of the postmodernity that has permeated today's world, primarily relativism and pluralism. Relativism and pluralism mean that everyone has a truth, and people can relate them all together and tolerate one

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<sup>21</sup> Rehabs.com, “Dangers of Crystal Meth,” <http://luxury.rehabs.com/crystal-meth-addiction/dangers/> (accessed October 27, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> My own son used meth and was diagnosed as bi-polar. Personally, I have seen many men in VOI recovery with strong mental delusions. While a missionary in Amsterdam, we had a transgender come into the recovery in March 1990.

<sup>23</sup> James Diego Vigil, *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), 46.



another in the name of unity, being politically correct with everyone.<sup>24</sup> This opens the door to believe in anything, according to personal preference.<sup>25</sup> If this is the case, then one must ask, “What was the reason for Christ coming and dying for the sins of the world, if what we believe about Jesus doesn’t matter?” However, understanding the absolute truth about Jesus is what the gospel is all about (Luke 19:19).

Consequently, as VOI progresses into the future, it must focus on keeping its ministry principles, which never change, and upholding biblical values that give form to its philosophy of ministry. This is important because it is the foundation for the how’s and why’s of what it does. A strong relational connection with its G.A.N.G. is going to be essential for future ministry in order to collectively lead the four generations who are merging right now. These four generations are the “Four in One.”<sup>26</sup>

They are the Builders (born 1910 to 1946), Boomers (born 1946 to 1964), Busters (born 1965 to 1976), and Bridgers (born 1976 to 1994) together with what Gary L. McIntosh calls the Millennials (born 1995 to present).<sup>27</sup> VOI’s pioneering generation contains Builders, Boomers, and Busters. The younger generation is comprised of Bridgers and Millennials. The younger generations need to stay humble, faithful, available, and teachable. The older generations who brought VOI ministry into this

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<sup>24</sup> Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 22-26. Postmodernists have abandoned the illusive search for truth, or more accurately, they have redefined truth in terms of consensus and “whatever works for you.” This opens the door to believe in anything, according to personal preference.

<sup>26</sup> McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Rainer, *The Bridger Generation*, 2.

present time need to be open to learn and risk, because what got us here will not necessarily take us where we need to go in the future. According to Gibbs, “In this fast-changing world, leaders must not project an aloof know-it-all image or attitude.”<sup>28</sup> The generations cannot afford to erect barriers. Leaders cannot lead from a distance but rather need to be “in a learning mode, especially when facing situations not previously encountered. To empower others effectively, leaders must have demonstrated competence in their own area of specialization. But they not only must be aware of what they know, leaders must readily acknowledge what they do not know. Both elements are essential for the empowerment of others.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Cultural Influences upon Community and Church**

The cultural influences that today form VOI began in the turbulent times of the sixties. There was racial rioting, and ethnic groups were emerging among the population of Los Angeles’ melting pot.<sup>30</sup> Minority groups wanted to know the truth of their historical roots, and cultures were being divided into subcultures. This was especially true for African-American and Mexican-American populations, who were challenging social reformation and seeking to restructure institutions.

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<sup>28</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Nicky Cruz, *Give Me Back My Dignity* (La Puente, CA: Cruz Press, 1993), 12-16.

Economic and political entities were struggling for power and identity. Kent State College students were massacred for protesting against the Vietnam War,<sup>31</sup> and Pentagon marchers expressed their disgust by putting flowers into the gun barrels of the National Guard.<sup>32</sup> A Harvard professor by the name of Timothy Leary was known as the “High Priest of LSD” (Lysergic acid diethylamide), a psychedelic drug that made people hallucinate and lose touch with reality.<sup>33</sup> “Make love not war” was the shouts and slogans of the American young and restless. Their philosophy was not to trust anyone over thirty years of age, and their way of life was this: “Turn-on, Tune-In and Drop-Out,” a term coined by Leary to describe the psychedelic experience,<sup>34</sup> which comes from his broader comment: “Like every great religion of the past we seek to find the divinity within and to express this revelation in a life of glorification and the worship of God. These ancient goals we define in the metaphor of the present turn-on, tune-in, drop-out.”<sup>35</sup>

The panoramas of the sixties were chaotic. Racial shouts rang throughout the streets claiming their identity and power. Grassroots power, ideologies, and philosophies were created among African Americans and Mexican Americans.<sup>36</sup> These minority

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<sup>31</sup> Howard Means, *67 Shots: Kent State and the End of American Innocence* (Philadelphia: da Capo Press, 2016), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 3101.

<sup>32</sup> Bernie Boston, “Flower Power,” *The Washington Evening Star*, October 21, 1967.

<sup>33</sup> Rand L. Greenfield, *A Change of Consciousness: A Hippie’s Memoir of the Sixties and Beyond* (Albuquerque, NM: Sixties Pub., 2015), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 432.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Martinez Hosang, “The Changing Valence of White Racial Innocence: Black-Brown Unity in the 1970’s Los Angeles School Desegregation,” in *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond conflict and Coalition*, eds. Josh Kun and Laura Pulido (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2433.

groups were coming against the government and institutions that had been oppressing and neglecting the poor and underprivileged for many years. This raised tension among the races, and groups formed to protect the people and be their voice. Such groups included the Black Panthers, representing the African Americans, and the Brown Berets, representing the Mexican Americans.<sup>37</sup> The Brown Berets marched in demonstration protesting the senseless murder of journalist Rubén Salazar, who was shot by a tear gas canister in the Silver Dollar Bar on Whittier Boulevard in Los Angeles, California.<sup>38</sup> This incited a riot during which many were jailed and beaten by Los Angeles Sheriffs.

All of this deepened the fragmentation of races. They submerged into their neighborhoods and huddled in gangs according to race and ethnicity for the purpose of identity, security, and territorial power. The Chicano gangs were fueled by cultural conflict, psychological and emotional struggles, poverty, and poor conditions in the barrio. The gang problem was severe in Los Angeles, where the majority of Chicano gangs resided. After the Los Angeles Riots, the Chicanos wanted to unite, and the Brown Berets were born, organizing student walkouts in Los Angeles institutions to complain of academic curriculum ignoring Mexican-American history. The Chicano activist group lifted up the slogan of “Viva La Raza” and marched in step in the 1960s with the Black Power Movement,<sup>39</sup> which also was taking root eight hundred miles to the north in the city of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., location 3273.

<sup>38</sup> Grace Jang, “The Missing Years: Northern California,” The Ruben Salazar Project, <http://rubensalazarproject.com/2012/04/17/missing-years-northern-california/> (accessed May 31, 2016). The Ruben Salazar Project is sponsored by USC Annenberg.

<sup>39</sup> Martinez Hosang, “The Changing Valence of White Racial Innocence,” location 122.

Oakland in the form of the Black Panther Party with its slogan of “All Power to the People.” After the Watts riots in Los Angeles, the Black Panther Party established its presence up north.<sup>40</sup>

While all of these activist groups were springing up, as an activist group VOI was also suspect in the beginning of its ministry in 1967 due to the people it attracted. There could not have been a better setup in reaching out to these groups who were in turmoil, confused, and lost in identity in the inner cities. The sovereign God birthed VOI to be a movement that could meet their spiritual needs, a multicultural ministry that reaches out to the hurting people of the world.<sup>41</sup>

### **Reaching a Lost Generation**

In the midst of all the chaos, there were five men that God divinely chose to reach out to four distinctive subgroups of people. First, there was Bill Bright, who felt his heart stirring to reach college students in the 1950s, so he founded Campus Crusade for Christ.<sup>42</sup> The second man was Loren Cunningham, who started Youth with a Mission (YWAM) to reach inwardly to passive and inactive church teenagers in 1960.<sup>43</sup> The third man was Chuck Smith, who brought the gospel to hippies and surfers and later

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., location 1908.

<sup>41</sup> Victory Outreach International, “Mission Statement,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/vision/mission-statement/> (accessed October 27, 2016).

<sup>42</sup> CRU, “About Us,” <https://www.cru.org/about.html> (accessed October 12, 2016). Campus Crusade for Christ was established by Bill Bright and Vonette Bright in 1951 at the University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>43</sup> YWAM: Youth with a Mission Worldwide, “About YWAM.org,” <http://www.ywam.org/about-ywam-org/> (accessed May 31, 2016).

established Calvary Chapel in 1965.<sup>44</sup> The fourth man was Rev. Wilkerson, who was discussed in the Introduction of this paper, whom God used to reach a lost generation on the east coast; and Arguinzoni would follow in his footsteps as the fifth to help bring revival to drug addicts and gangsters of Los Angeles on the west coast.

While mentioning all of these men and their organizations seems tangential to VOI, it really is not. Seeing these movements flourish within the past five decades shines upon the love, mercy, sovereignty, and wisdom of God acting in a fallen world. He chose men of strength and character to shoulder the burden of being spiritual founders. It was within this broader spiritual context that the ministry of Victory Outreach International was founded by Arguinzoni and flourished as well. God knew that the generation of the sixties was going to need specialized ministries to span a fragmented culture.

The traditional churches of that time were not going to move beyond their denominational steeples and predictable Sunday school curricula. They were not prepared to discard their hymn books in the name of Christ and worship to a contemporary sound that was unfamiliar to them. They were not going to venture from their nice varnished wooden pews to go out and reach generations they did not understand—and beside that, young people seemed weird. There was a gap between the older and younger generations of that time and apparently a spiritual gap as well. God needed to bridge into His kingdom, and the above ministries played a crucial part in the broader *missio Dei* of the era. Victory Outreach International was part of the bridge that God brought to segments of that new generation.

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Bustraan, *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Pub., 2014), Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 145.

## **I Am Victory Outreach: Identity and Uniqueness**

From the day of his conversion, Arguinzoni felt called to the ministry.<sup>45</sup> After leaving New York City to attend LABI in 1962, and marrying a year later, Arguinzoni partnered with his wife working at a Teen Challenge Center in Los Angeles. While counseling residents of the center, they began to notice that the men and women were not making it into their parents' churches, which were affiliated with mainline denominations. The ex-gangsters and drug addicts felt unaccepted and not trusted, as they sensed people in the congregation gathering their purses close to their sides and looking at them with unwelcoming expressions. Many congregants did not like the fact that their children would be in the same nursery and children's ministries as the offspring of criminals.<sup>46</sup>

Since these new converts did not seem to fit within traditional churches of the day, Arguinzoni and his wife felt led by God to open a church that God would fill with drug addicts and their families. Arguinzoni never wanted to be a pastor, because he knew he could not stay in one place—his desire was to travel, like Cruz. However, a passion for the streets had been birthed in him from the day of his salvation, and the new converts surrounding him needed a church home.<sup>47</sup>

Society in the sixties viewed a drug addict as always a drug addict. There was little offered in the way of redemption, and that mentality entered the traditional churches

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>47</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 89.

also.<sup>48</sup> This perspective reflected the very reason why Teen Challenge did not become a church. Since Rev. Wilkerson was affiliated with the Assemblies of God, he brought this theological identity with him when founding Teen Challenge.<sup>49</sup> If Teen Challenge became a congregation, denominational funding would cease from the Assemblies of God. For this reason, the parachurch organization was classified as Domestic Missions for the Assembly of God ministries, and this was seen simply as evangelistic outreach for drug addicts in their districts. When graduates would go home to incorporate into traditional churches, they felt the silent treatment and subtle rejection, and some of them ended up going back to their old habits.<sup>50</sup>

The highest position to which a person could attain in Teen Challenge was becoming a director of the center. Through such limiting rules, even the denomination during this time period expressed the belief that an ex-drug addict could never become a pastor, due to the integrity and character that are required to be one. However, such rules contradicted with the very call of God on the lives of new converts. Many of the men and women arrived to the feet of Christ as divorced people from that world in which they used to live, but the theological framework of tradition would not allow them to function as new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). They could not become licensed for senior leadership, even with theological and biblical degrees from the denomination's own institutes and Bible colleges.

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<sup>48</sup> I saw these attitudes firsthand. In 1961, I began sniffing glue at the age of eleven, joined a gang at fourteen, became a full-blown heroin addict at fifteen, and did not leave this lifestyle until the age of twenty-six.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 3 for further details regarding the influence of this theological identity on VOI.

<sup>50</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 89.



This is where Arguinzoni and his wife began to pray and seek the Lord, asking Him what to do. So many men and women were getting saved (Acts 2:47), experiencing new life in Christ (Romans 7:6), and discovering their God-given gifts and talents (Romans 12:6), yet their own denominations were not ready to accept them and their families. They still viewed them as drug addicts, unruly, unsociable, and full of tattoos and big mustaches. While the inner character of these new converts had been changed and renewed, their physical appearance had not yet been transformed. This led to the beginning of the “Junkie Church.”<sup>51</sup> This is what people called those who joined VOI, before the group had any given name. How this junkie church expanded into a worldwide movement is the focus of discussion in Chapter 2.

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<sup>51</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 132.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CHURCH CONTEXT OF VICTORY OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL

This chapter presents the history and vision of VOI. It started as a single congregation and became a global movement. Its evangelistic method is simple: just meet the needs of hurting people who desperately seek a better life. This requires being able to see the actual depravity, loneliness, and hopelessness in the lives of young people in inner cities. Ministry begins where people just exist, walking as the spiritually dead into eternity.

#### **The History and Vision of Victory Outreach International**

Victory Outreach International initially existed as a seed of hope in East Los Angeles. It began as a church for former drug addicts and ex-gangsters that grew into a cluster of Southern California congregations that were planted to receive graduates from Victory Outreach recovery homes. Today it has become a worldwide denomination with spinoff institutes and a mission agency.

#### Victory Temple: The Drug Addict Church

The “junkie church” began as a Christ-centered recovery home focused on evangelism and discipleship within the family of Christ in 1966. First, God started to do

miracles, using Arguinzoni and his wife to impart hope and life through the gospel of Christ to drug addicts, gang members, alcoholics, and prostitutes. Then the Arguinzoni home opened and started bringing men in to kick their habits and to receive discipleship one by one. This quickly grew into the Christian Recovery Home for Men. “The Home” as it was called in those days, was the first. Then it was followed by the women’s home, called the Hacienda Home for Women.<sup>1</sup>

In 1967 Arguinzoni and his rugged band of disciples purchased a dilapidated building in East Los Angeles, turned it into a church, and called it “Victory Temple.”<sup>2</sup> This new breed of grateful believers was willing to go where no sane person would go, places where addicts would hang out peddling their drugs to others who had fallen victim to their inner enticements, temptations, and weaknesses. Although Victory Temple was an official congregation open to all who wanted to follow Christ, it still was derogatorily called the “Drug Addict Church.”<sup>3</sup> The nickname stuck, because the congregation was not viewed as a viable church plant but rather as a salvation center.

Men who were murderers, thieves, and violent offenders were now peaceful and gentle Sunday school teachers to children as well as courteous ushers who showed people to their seats with love and kindness. People who visited Victory Temple were amazed by these young converts and could not believe that they were the former rejects of society. Most congregants were unemployed, on welfare, and did not have any trade or education.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>3</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, *Once a Junkie* (San Dimas, CA: Victory Outreach Pub., 1987), 138-139.

Arguinzoni had to teach them how to tithe and give offerings, and people began to give and grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

With the biblical knowledge that Arguinzoni and his wife had learned in LABI, they started teaching the foundations of faith and occasionally invited some of the teachers from LABI to come and teach basic doctrine along with other Bible courses that contributed to enhancing sound biblical knowledge. Arguinzoni also began to send some of his men to LABI to prepare them for ministry, but there was always the fear of losing them into academia and sacrificing Victory's vision of reaching the outcast of society.

Constant criticism of being mocked and classified as a ghetto church that represents the lower class and reaches only ghetto people did not sway early leaders at Victory Temple.<sup>5</sup> In the beginning, they saw church critics as modern-day Pharisees and comforted themselves with Scripture—specifically Mark 2:14-17, which shows how religious leaders of the day criticized Jesus for reaching out to a reviled tax collector, and Luke 7:36-50, where Jesus allows a repentant prostitute to anoint His feet with oil and dry them with her hair. Those at VOI took heart in knowing that Jesus saw people in their circumstances as valuable and worthwhile, rich in Him.

#### Response of the Church to Its Changing Status

As Victory began to transform from a missions endeavor into a full-fledged congregation, leaders came to view accusations and criticisms as God speaking for further change: transformation on the inside needed to reflect on the outside as well. This

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

meant a clean and godly appearance (1 Peter 1:16). Leaders started trimming their mustaches, using long-sleeved shirts to cover tattoos, and wearing suits and ties to Sunday morning worship services. No longer were leaders wearing homemade khaki cutoffs with long white socks past the shin, and a plaid Pendleton. Such changes became values, which reflected a sincere devotion and commitment to God and His Church.

These changes began with Arguinzoni himself.

As founding pastor, he always modeled what he wanted to see in the ministry. Arguinzoni taught through God's Word that it was important to be good examples (2 Corinthians 5:20). If he wanted people to pray before the church service began, he would model it. If he wanted congregants to evangelize the neighborhoods, he would lead into the streets—showing how to have street rallies, city crusades, and seminars.<sup>6</sup> In a similar way, Julie Arguinzoni ministered and led the women in the church, and families were strengthened in Christ.

All of this challenged members of Victory Temple to excel in excellence and quality. Slowly people no longer needed welfare and began to engage in disciplined work, attend and graduate from high school, obtain college degrees, and even become car owners and homeowners.<sup>7</sup> This was a big step for most. Although such benchmarks may not mean

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<sup>6</sup> Victory Outreach International, "Events," <http://victoryoutreach.org/event/> (accessed October 15, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Although there are no congregational or denominational surveys to prove these claims, evidence was gathered through multiple interviews from Victory congregants who have been Christians for decades. Richard Ledesma, interview by author, Riverside, CA, 2014, was once a drug addict but now is a homeowner and has his own business called Reina's Termite Control. Carlos De Haro, interview by author, Riverside, CA, 2007, is an ex-gangster and former drug addict but now a proud husband of a beautiful family. He is also a homeowner, with a respectable job at a company that produces vitamins and health products. Everaldo Ortiz, interview by author, Riverside, CA, 2008, was once a drug addict but is now a homeowner and has his own construction business as a licensed contractor.

much to other ministries—such as Calvary Chapel and mainline denominations that attract middle- and upper-middle-class congregants—for Victory Outreach, such stability was a triumph. This was because mainline denominations often reached traditional and civilized citizens, who already knew how to work, budget their money, and treat others with kindness and courtesy, because they were raised in good families.

Loyalty and faithfulness were two more principles that Victory embraced with all its heart. These two distinctive principles became essential in people’s commitment to God and leaders. Loyalty and faithfulness were natural Christian values for Victory, as they were the same commitments that congregants once had towards their neighborhood gangs, drugs, and wild lifestyle. Only now, they were transformed and turned around for the glory and honor of God. This may be why sometimes others who do not understand the ministry think that VOI has cultist tones.<sup>8</sup>

#### Expansion of Core Ministries

As Victory grew as a church, so did its burden for the ghettos and the inner cities of the world. This started with East Los Angeles for Jesus and involved junkie and gang rallies and crusades with popular celebrities of the sixties like Art Linkletter, a family-friendly celebrity who incorporated ordinary people into his broadcasts with comic results. He became “a crusader against drug use” and developed an interest in partnering with Victory, after his daughter committed suicide while strung out on LSD.<sup>9</sup> Another popular

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<sup>8</sup> Sanchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity*, 98.

<sup>9</sup> William Grimes, “Art Linkletter, TV Host, Dies at 97,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/arts/27linkletter.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/arts/27linkletter.html?_r=0) (accessed October 17, 2016).

outreach happened in 1970 through a major motion picture release based on *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Cruz already was well known as an evangelist from Rev. Wilkerson's bestselling book by the same name.<sup>10</sup> Popular actor Pat Boone portrayed Rev. Wilkerson in the movie, and Erik Estrada—who would go on to achieve television fame—played Cruz.<sup>11</sup> All of this helped to raise Victory's public profile.

As the ministry began to expand in the 1970s, Victory Temple leaders started planting churches in more areas where recovery homes were located. Congregations formed around the Los Angeles basin first, and then out into the Inland Empire and Northern California where more recovery homes had been established. These efforts resulted in churches in Pico Rivera (1971), San Bernardino (1974), Santa Ana (1975), Riverside (1979), San Jose (1979), San Francisco (1981), and Hayward (1982).

This is where my personal story intersects with Victory Outreach, and it is the reason why I can testify firsthand to historical accounts of VOI. I have been a living witness since 1976.<sup>12</sup> My home church was Victory Outreach in Riverside.

In 1979, seeing that people were gearing up to plant more churches in other areas throughout the United States, Arguinzoni began hosting Bible conferences. The first one was at the Victory Outreach on St. Louis Street in East Los Angeles. As founding pastor, Arguinzoni felt the need to gather everyone to internalize the VOI vision and to make sure

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

<sup>11</sup> *The Cross and the Switchblade*, directed by Don Murray, Gateway Films, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> I accepted Christ at Teen Challenge in Los Angeles where Arguinzoni and his wife worked. I served at the Teen Challenge in Hawaii from 1978 to 1980, something God divinely arranged before a family feud broke out in my Casa Blanca neighborhood in Riverside. If I had not left the state, I would have been caught right in the middle of it. I returned to Riverside in 1980 and began my discipleship at Victory Outreach Riverside. Although working at a trailer factory, I remained very involved in the ministry and God called me into full time ministry. I opened up the first Recovery Home for men in Riverside and began to disciple men.

he could strengthen the leaders at least two times per year. The purpose was to stay focused and united in the vision that God had given to Victory Outreach. The first and second conferences were titled “Bible Conference,” but after that they were more focused on the vision and the mission field, which comprised the inner cities of the world. There seemed to be a tendency in some to start doing ministry according to their own understanding, and this sometimes resulted in church splits and unfaithfulness to God and the ministry.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1980s, those whom Arguinzoni and his wife mentored continued to plant churches throughout California but also spread throughout the nation—for example, Phoenix (1983), Oahu (1985), Brooklyn and New York City (1985).<sup>14</sup> To help shepherd the new leadership, Arguinzoni selected three men to help oversee the growing ministry. These leaders were called “elders” and assisted in the major decisions of the ministry. The elder’s role was to supervise the churches located in different regions of the nation. These were called “sectors” in the accountability structure of VOI. The elders pastored their own churches as well and crafted VOI’s vision and mission statement, along with its policies and procedures.<sup>15</sup>

From the late 1980s into the 1990s, churches were planted internationally. These included Mexico City (1984), Amsterdam (1985), and London (1988). Then followed Barcelona (1990), Naples (1994), Dublin (1994), Edinburgh (1995), Chennai (1997) and

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<sup>13</sup> For example, some who had gone to Bible school came back feeling that they knew more than the pastors; and leaning on their own understanding on how a church should be operated, they brought division and ended up leaving. Another group introduced a church split and took congregations, because they became influenced by another ministry that was very legalistic and did not believe in televisions. These preached strongly against Catholics, so they splintered off on their own. All of this I witnessed firsthand.

<sup>14</sup> I was launched to church plant in the Hawaiian Islands during the 1986 conference.

<sup>15</sup> Victory Outreach International, “Mission Statement.”



many others.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, members of VOI continued to plant congregations throughout the United States.

All of this activity required another layer of leadership. Arguinzoni designated regional pastors to oversee churches in the region. Regional pastors were supervised by the elders and served as resources for congregational pastors. Each elder then became responsible for a geographical territory—for example United States Sector, Mexico Sector, Central-South America Sector, International Sector (Europe, United Kingdom, Africa, New Zealand).

This expansion of churches and leadership coincided with VOI's realization of a lack of academic foundation in leaders. Arguinzoni and VOI's eldership felt a need to provide deeper doctrinal training for Victory Outreach pastors. In response, VOI formed the Victory Outreach School of Ministry (VOSOM), which later became Victory Education Training Institute, to offer "biblical, ministerial and leadership training" as well as an associate's degree in Bible and Theology. Those who graduate from VETI now can earn a bachelor's degree from Victory Outreach Bible College, which was established this past year.<sup>17</sup> Education always has been a value to Arguinzoni and his wife, since they were graduates of LABI and understood the importance of a strong biblical foundation in the type of people VOI reaches.

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<sup>16</sup> I relocated from Hawaii to help the pioneering work in Amsterdam in 1988. I was in Amsterdam for four years, in charge of evangelism and part of the church-planting team as a teacher, also planting a VOI church in Barcelona, Spain, and in Naples, Italy.

<sup>17</sup> Victory Outreach Bible College, "About," <http://vobiblecollege.org/about/> (accessed December 12, 2016); Victory Outreach International, "About VETI." See also Sanchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity*, 129.

Also in the 1990s, VOI started forming other departments. When Sonny Arguinzoni, Jr. turned twenty-two, he launched “God’s Anointed Now Generation.”<sup>18</sup> As a preacher’s kid raised in his father’s high-profile ministry, he was brought up in the church and never had experienced the drug life or gang affiliation. G.A.N.G. began as a local youth ministry in 1993, with its own conventions and winter retreats. This is when the next generation of leaders in VOI was born. Other ministries included a church-planting and mission agency called “United We Can” and “United Women in Ministry” led by Arguinzoni’s wife.<sup>19</sup> In 1998 the Urban Training Center (UTC) was founded in Bridgeport, Connecticut for the purpose of training young adults in four areas: “Personal Development, Church Leadership, Church Planting and Missions Outreach.”<sup>20</sup> Today there are five UTC locations: East Coast, West Coast, Mexico, Panama, and Cape Town. UTC has become the place for the next generation to be equipped as church planters, pastors, and evangelists. However, for those people who stay within their home churches and have other gifts, there is no established training or rigorous path for leadership development.

While much was accomplished in the first thirty years of VOI, as early leaders, we did not know what we were doing, nor were we licensed or educated. Victory Outreach’s pioneering days of growth were similar to those of the Azusa Street Mission

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<sup>18</sup> Victory Outreach International, “Youth Ministry,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/youth-ministry/> (accessed December 12, 2016). See also Victory Outreach International, “Sonny Arguinzoni Jr.,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/vision/leadership/pastor-sonny-arguinzoni-jr/> (accessed December 12, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Victory Outreach International, “United We Can,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/united-we-can/> (accessed December 12, 2016); Victory Outreach International, “United Women in Ministry,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/womens-ministry/> (accessed December 12, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Victory Outreach International, “Urban Training Center,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/urban-training-center/> (accessed December 12, 2016).

Revival. The Azusa Street revivalists were ridiculed as “alleluias” and “tambourines,” labeled as “sects” and “ravenous wolves,” but the icon of the revival has been a source of empowerment, just as VOI has been throughout the world.<sup>21</sup> “Barrios for Christ” continued as our cry for the neighborhood.

In the late 1990s, VOI leadership announced a church-planting goal called “1,000 for 2000,” which meant one thousand churches were to be planted by the year 2000. However, VOI did not reach this goal. The rising interest and emphasis on a solid biblical education and academic foundation for leaders slowed the church-planting process. At this time, leaders and their churches began facing other problems as well. Between 2000 and 2010, although VOI now had over three hundred churches and even more recovery homes throughout the globe,<sup>22</sup> it experienced having to replace many pastors in the United States due to character issues, falls into sexual immorality, general backsliding, and burnout. Although Arguinzoni instituted another level of leadership in 2013 called “multi-regional pastors” to oversee regional pastors and as a way to help pastoral turnover, there is a deeper issue that needs to be addressed within the VOI context: the discipleship bridge between making converts and forming leaders. This is what has given rise to my missional discipleship strategy described in Part Three of this project.

Discipleship has happened in a haphazard way within VOI. After the discipline and rigor of the recovery home, VOI stresses the importance of providing something called “Foundations of Faith I, II, and III.” Foundations of Faith I is didactic teaching on

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<sup>21</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. *Azusa Street: Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 2006), 12.

<sup>22</sup> David Didia, phone interview by author, Riverside, CA, 2016. As of 2016, VOI has 302 churches and 334 recovery homes. Didia gathers all data for Victory Outreach International.

the Christian basics of salvation and identity in Christ, baptism, and communion. It also presents the structure and purpose of VOI along with its history, vision, and values. Foundations of Faith II provides practical instruction on the five basic habits every Christian needs to grow into spiritual maturity: studying God's Word, prayer, evangelism, tithing, and fellowship. In Foundations of Faith III, congregants discover how their personality, passion, and experience can be used in ministry.

While there is unity in the concepts that comprise Foundations of Faith, there is no single resource that teaches it. They are basic guidelines to ensure VOI members learn core Christian doctrine as practiced by VOI. VOI church pastors often use other resources offered by others,<sup>23</sup> and many women's leaders teach from *United Women in Ministry & G.A.N.G. Girls Discipleship Training*, written by J. Arguinzoni.<sup>24</sup>

While one-on-one mentoring provides practical guidance in discipleship and leadership development, there is no uniform content or established process. Rather, congregations gather as regions three times a year for what is called a "discipleship seminar." These all-church meetings are required for all regions in VOI. Each region selects an elder, multi-regional pastor, or regional pastor to speak to the region in response to whatever the pastors feel their churches need at that time. The topics that are taught coincide with leadership, church planting, church growth, church administration, worship,

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<sup>23</sup> One popular example is Rick Warren, "CLASS Deluxe Combo Kit," Pastors.com, <http://store.pastors.com/collections/class-materials/products/class-deluxe-combo-kit> (accessed December 12, 2016). This resource provides Saddleback Church's discipleship path: "C.L.A.S.S. 101: Discovering Church Membership," "C.L.A.S.S. 201: Discovering Spiritual Maturity," "C.L.A.S.S. 301: Discovering My S.H.A.P.E.," "C.L.A.S.S. 401: Discovering My Mission."

<sup>24</sup> Julie Arguinzoni, *United Women in Ministry & G.A.N.G. Girls Discipleship Training*, ver. 5 (Chino, CA: Victory Outreach International, October 30, 2013).

or whatever surfaces. VOI encourages all congregants to attend these regional discipleship seminars. However, once pastors and congregants return to their churches, how discipleship is implemented widely varies. The one commonality is the communication of VOI values, which can be summed up in the five E's and the three C's.<sup>25</sup>

The five E's stand for Exaltation, Envision, Evangelism, Equipping, and Establishing. "Exaltation" reminds congregants to focus on studying the Word of God and lifting Him up in worship and praise, along with the spiritual disciplines that every growing disciple must have in their life. "Envisioning" is a call to hope in the future. "Evangelism" is a call for congregants to go into the streets, find others like themselves, and share the good news of Christ. "Equipping" means that as members of the Body of Christ congregants must seek to grow in Christ and are responsible for mentoring others. At VOI, this focus has often taken shape as training as pastors, church planters, and evangelists in organizations such as VETI and UTC. "Establishing" involves having strong and stable marriages to form a mature and solid congregation. This means finding ways to strengthen married couples, singles, teens, young adults, and children.

The three C's are Cause, Community, and Corporate. "Cause" means keeping the VOI vision and mission at the forefront of the church. This gives church members a soldier mentality and reminds them that they are ambassadors for Christ (Ephesians 6:10-20). Remembering the VOI cause calls for commitment and dedication to the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Community" is the relational aspect of VOI church and ministry. It reminds congregants of the importance of family bonding and *koinonia* that the church

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Further details regarding the five E's and three C's will be presented in Chapter 4 and Part Three of this project.

needs in order to balance the warrior mentality, especially because Christ-followers need camaraderie in the battles of life (James 5:16). Finally, “Corporate” calls church members to work together, to be organized and productive in the business of Father God.<sup>26</sup>

### **Victory Outreach Riverside**

Victory Outreach Riverside was planted by Gary Rivera, Arguinzoni’s brother-in-law, and his wife. They came to Riverside in 1979 after praying for confirmation to start a church in Casa Blanca, a very rowdy barrio known for shooting down a helicopter in 1975. In the beginning, the church actively only had fifteen to twenty people, basically a big Bible study group. This group learned the history and vision of VOI. The church grew to about fifty people. G. Rivera pastored the church for two years before leaving due to character relapse and a need for further training. Since its formation in 1979, Victory Outreach Riverside has faced leadership challenges.

Between 1982 and 2006, the Victory Outreach Riverside suffered through multiple pastoral turnovers. After G. Rivera, the second pastor served the church for three years, contributed strong discipleship and a burden for the mission field to the now 125 congregants, but left after only three years to plant a church in Amsterdam. The third pastor was installed in 1985, taught the church a strong sense of discipline and prayer, but stayed for only four years before moving on to direct a recovery home in La Puente. In 1989, equipped with a church building and 150 members, Victory Outreach Riverside installed its fourth pastor, who had come in after being part of a pioneering team on the East Coast. Although he brought a strong preaching and teaching ministry and the church

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

grew to 200 members, he left after three years due to medical issues. The same happened with the fifth pastor, who stayed only four years. In 1996, Victory Outreach Riverside saw its sixth pastor and experienced leadership stability for the first time. He served for ten years, formed strong relationships with city officials, oversaw recovery homes, but was taken out due to a decadent relationship in 2006. The repercussions and constant relapses of leadership caused leadership backlash (rebelliousness) throughout the years and reduced congregational membership.<sup>27</sup> Just as the church was gaining confidence and direction, it seemed that the leadership would go through another disturbance or discouragement. It was if people were just being traditionally faithful to an organization, out of respect and gratitude instead of due to love for God and His Church.

In 2006 I was installed as the seventh pastor of Victory Outreach Riverside. Through its constant leadership upheaval, the congregation has faced a continual challenge to bring restoration and to recalibrate the church back to its promises and vision that God has given His people here in Riverside. Since I helped pioneer the church plant with G. Rivera in 1980, was launched out into ministry by the congregation in 1985, and have maintained solid relationships over the years, when I arrived to lead the church it was like a big brother now coming home to shepherd the flock.

At that time, ministry was carried out at Victory Outreach Riverside in much the same way as in every other VOI congregation. The Foundations of Faith I, II, and III were taught once a week in a preached sermon at the Wednesday evening church service. New converts streamed in from recovery homes and small groups gathered for prayer,

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<sup>27</sup> Victory Outreach leaders and congregants, interviews by author, Riverside, CA, 1979-2006.

fellowship, and discussion of the pastor's Sunday sermon content. While certain men and women evangelized the barrios for Christ, and a few young people were sent to UTC, the entire church was not being mobilized for service. Lay leaders and small groups were not reproducing, and this lack in leadership affected discipleship of the next generation and discipling new Christians who had not come from recovery homes. Despite these struggles, there was great opportunity at Victory Outreach Riverside to become more missional and strengthen and create new leaders.

### **Obstacles and Opportunities Associated with Discipleship**

The adaptive challenge addressed in this ministry focus project confronts how to raise up the new generation of VOI leaders, who have grown up in the church, and teach them to carry on the VOI vision through discipleship in today's postmodern context. There are both obstacles and opportunities present when addressing this challenge, and it is important to understand them in all of their complexities. Since Victory Outreach Riverside is the pilot church for this project, the obstacles and opportunities will be considered through this contextual lens.

First, it is important to recognize that Victory Outreach Riverside is in a transitional period between generations: the pioneer generation and the younger generation. The pioneer generation is comprised of those people who started VOI and were the first disciples of the founder. As senior pastor, I am counted among this group, along with current pastoral leaders. The younger generation is comprised of two groups: congregants who have been raised in the church (sons and daughters of the pioneer generation) and former gang members and drug addicts who continue to join the church after finishing their



year of rehabilitation and discipleship in a recovery home. The main obstacle is that the young people and pioneers see life differently, due to their backgrounds, and have difficulties communicating. The opportunity here is that they both love God, desire to serve Him, and hunger to build a future from a positive perspective.

Since most in the younger generation never personally experienced the drug scene and were not raised in a drug-addict household or gang affiliated family, they were not disciplined through the recovery homes. Their discipleship happened through whatever their family provided and church programs. This group is very talented, skilled, and has a higher level of formal education. Members of this population tend to be deeper thinkers and need to comprehend why there is so much gratitude, love, commitment, and even sacrifice within the pioneer generation and those of their age who come from the streets. Everything has been given to the younger generation, and sometimes they forget that someone already paved the way and paid the price for the benefits that they now enjoy.

The younger generation faces the same challenge in reaching the former drug addicts of today and gang members. While there are young people from recovery homes coming into the church with this experience, this new and more diverse generation now must use different methods and techniques in a postmodern context, which makes ministry very different from the pioneering times. The younger generation needs a fresh anointing for today, innovative ideas given by the Holy Spirit, and extraordinary experiences with God just as their spiritual fathers and mothers received.

Second, it is important to create new forms of communication among congregants and leaders. The pioneer generation needs to recognize the difference between divergent

opinions and the core Christian doctrine that forms VOI's vision. The challenge here is understanding and agreeing on what are the absolutes and negotiables. They need to learn to dream together and edify each other with words and concrete encouragements.

Appreciative Inquiry and the missional change process offer opportunities for shared positive communication and raising awareness that increases mutual understanding of each other and this transitional period that Victory Outreach is currently experiencing. Such communication can help bridge the gap between the mono-cultural pioneer generation and the more diverse, global-minded younger generation. Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk comment on this in *The Missional Leader*. They write:

We need to understand that leaders enable formation of a missional church to the extent they are able to cultivate this process in others. Leaders in discontinuous change recognize that they cannot determine or define the future. In an in-between period, we are in between. The world we once inhabited as a church is largely gone. Many of the habits and skills needed in the pastorate are less functional today.<sup>28</sup>

Creating new forms of positive communication, appreciating the past while imagining dreams for the future, can help ease the constant tension between the pioneer generation and the younger generation. This tension is due to a lack of communication and knowledge gap between the old and the young. The forefathers have been accused of being too traditional and having an inability to be open-minded. This tension takes shape as the older clinging to beliefs and customs and contrasts with young people's striving to find their own identity, practices, and beliefs. For example, the older generation has thought that tattooing, slang taking, and baggy wear need to stay in the streets and the world; but the younger generation in its search for identity tends to be trendy, fashionable,

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<sup>28</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 145.

and communicate with urban slang. The older generation tends to forget that in the sixties, they also were searching for their identity. This tension brings the opportunity to look back and remember what happened in those early traditional churches that were not open or flexible to the influx of an ex-gangster generation that was coming into the Body of Christ. The pioneer generation has an opportunity to walk with the new generation as a way of resolving the tension between the past and present, with an eye towards the future. In this way, Victory Outreach Riverside can remain open to the Spirit of God and discern the times in which it lives.

Third, a discipleship path that creates leaders is needed. In VOI, leaders are defined as people of influence, who reproduce themselves in others in whatever ministry they are in. Their character is aligned with what they teach, preach, and live, and they are respected by their followers. VOI is missional by its very nature, in that it discipled converts and then sends them into the marginalized communities of the world to make more disciples. It follows closely Jesus' discipleship path: calling and inviting people to follow, living and doing ministry together for a period of time, then being released to lead others.<sup>29</sup> VOI's values inspire people to action, instill passion and drive to do the will of God, and quickly move a church member from a passive pew warmer to fiery participant. Victory Outreach Riverside embraces this on a congregational level and strives to avoid what a significant number of churches unknowingly have become: killing fields of the creative spirit, the Holy Spirit. Like many in VOI, Riverside congregants mistakenly believe that being a leader means serving as pastor or teacher. However, from a missional perspective,

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<sup>29</sup> Further details of this process can be found in Chapter 5 of this discussion.

mobilizing the church means empowering and equipping all congregants in their various expressions of leadership.

While VOI Riverside, like other Victory Outreach congregations, historically has engaged strongly in evangelism and creating community, its leadership development needs to become more missional and respond to the challenges that are now present with the next generation. Since most emerging leaders from the younger generation have a formal education and were not disciplined in recovery homes, they need a new path to enter into leadership and to disciple others according to their God-given gifts. Since VOI continues to receive former drug addicts and ex-gangsters into its biblical community, any missional process that Victory Outreach Riverside engages in that affects leadership development needs to sustain what currently works: one-on-one mentorship, the Foundations of Faith, and a sense of family that creates belonging for congregants. This means continuing to see one another as family: spiritual brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, and the like. It also means being able to understand how the leadership problems it has experienced are actually issues of discipleship and character formation.

Engaging in the missional process at Victory Outreach Riverside to face the adaptive challenge together offers an incredible opportunity for the pioneer generation and the two groups that comprise the younger generation: they can learn to lean on one another for support. As members of the younger generation, VOI children and youth lean on their parents and adult congregants for growth, support, and guidance. From what the older generation has built, VOI's spiritual children find emotional support, food, and shelter as

they develop. In return, the older generation must lean on them for VOI's investment for the future, so that the legacy continues.

That is why an intentional discipleship strategy that offers a path into leadership is so important. Without it, VOI Riverside will not be able to transmit important ministry principles, values, philosophy, and practices that enable a transgenerational progression of a common vision within the changing reality of postmodernity. This means identifying present obstacles and opportunities to sharing values and principles that have allowed VOI success and growth. Essentially, it requires the convergence of old and new into an international multicultural movement that is firmly grounded on biblical and theological principles. Part Two presents the biblical foundations and theological framework that support this endeavor.

PART TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF VICTORY OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL

This chapter examines the development of VOI’s biblical foundation that has been established throughout the years, starting with the rearing up of its founding couple in Pentecostalism. Theological training came later when both Arguinzoni and his wife enrolled in the Latin American Bible Institute. This has rooted VOI in ecclesiology that is supported by Pentecostal belief.

VOI’s biblical roots have their beginning with two sets of parents raising their children on opposite sides of the United States. The Arguinzoni family raised “Sonny” in the ghettos of Williamsburg, New York, and the Rivera family raised their daughter, “Julie,” in the barrios of East Los Angeles, California. The Arguinzonis are from Puerto Rican descent, while the Riveras have a Mexican background. Neither of these Pentecostal families knew that God would birth a denomination through their children.

#### **Training Children in the Ways of the Lord**

The developing framework for spiritual formation in the life of a child is grounded and rooted in Scripture. The Bible instructs in Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in

the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” “Train a child in accordance with his nature, meaning that the teacher must take into account the idiosyncrasies of the child and customize the method of training accordingly.”<sup>1</sup> The NIV version translates the passage to mean simply that “one should train a child in the way he should go.” In other words, one should train a child using words, concepts, and illustrations that children can understand. This means speaking at their level, in language they can understand. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses instructs the Jewish people to impress the commands of the Lord into their children’s lives. He tells them to talk with them in their everyday life, when they are sitting at home or taking a walk, when they go to bed and when they get up in the morning. This means deliberately and intentionally infusing them to internalize God’s Word in their lives. Then the second half of Proverbs 22:6 is more likely to happen, “and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

Duane A. Garrett says that Proverbs 22:15 supports this. He writes: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. In conjunction with v. 6, it implies that if one gets the folly out of a child in the beginning, the child will continue in the right way.”<sup>2</sup> This was the method the Arguinzonis and the Riveras used in rearing their children.<sup>3</sup> It seems to have borne fruit, because as these children grew older,

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<sup>1</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 187.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 11-22; also Sonny Arguinzoni and Julie Arguinzoni, interview by author, West Covina, CA, 2008. On various occasions, while having fellowship at their house, they would share about their upbringing. S. Arguinzoni grew up in a very legalistic family and was always told what to do and not to do, which turned him away from Christ, but the Word of God was always shared with him by his parents and they always were praying for him. According to J. Arguinzoni, her family did not know God. Her mother had walked away from God at the age of twelve and they were in a



later married, and started their ministry, they did not abandon the spiritual path with which they were raised. Although they might have gone astray for a season in their lives, the sovereignty of God and His grace abounded towards them (Luke 15:30-31).

The impact of such Scriptures helps to establish a framework for spiritual formation. The Word of God says in Isaiah 55:11, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it” (NKJV).<sup>4</sup> The application of God’s Word and praying for the life and direction of the son and daughter that these two families had was just another miracle of God’s faithfulness in His promises to His children.

Hope also seems to play an important part of early spiritual training. God mentions the important aspect of hope in 1 Corinthians 2:9: “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’” (NKJV). This Scripture indicates that hoping in God can bring the unimaginable.

Neither set of parents ever dreamed that their children were going to be part of a Pentecostal movement that would leave a legacy to their children’s children and to future generations.<sup>5</sup> The impact of these Scriptures has transformed thousands of lives around the world since 1967, when “Sonny” and “Julie” started to preach as a team to the outcasts of

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midst of a divorce, when God did a miracle in her brother’s life and brought him back from the dead after overdosing on heroin.

<sup>4</sup> *Holy Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Gary Rivera and Abel Rivera, interview by author, 1980. This is my private observation through various conversations, interviews, and analysis while researching this project. I had the privilege of interviewing G. Rivera, when he was my pastor between 1980 and 1982. Georgina Arguinzoni felt this way about her son as well, as she testified in the DVD, *Sonny, The Movie*, released by Vision Outlet, San Dimas, CA.

society. Such influence and power by simple believing parents was transmitted to their children and later deposited into every new convert, bringing spiritual transformation that spread through the world.

The teaching and admonition of training one's children in the way they should go proved true and more rewarding than imaginable, as they have been used in a significant way in the history of the Church.<sup>6</sup> The Arguinzoni family's influence stemmed from the Assemblies of God. Their church was a Spanish-speaking congregation in Williamsburg, located in one of the Assemblies of God districts in New York, where the Arguinzonis resided.<sup>7</sup> The Rivera family's influence stemmed from the same source, the Assemblies of God. They attended The Church of the Redeemer in Baldwin Park, California and were part of the group that planted the church in November 21, 1961.<sup>8</sup> The roots of this church were also Pentecostal, and it has been common lore among members of the Rivera family that their great-grandfather attended and witnessed the Azusa Street Revival back in 1906.<sup>9</sup>

The Pentecostal influence on these two families is what ultimately laid the foundational framework for Pentecostalism in the founders of VOI and later its members. Both narratives resulted in a very practical spirituality that became a training ground for

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<sup>6</sup> *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, rev. and expand. ed., s.vv. "Victory Outreach International." "Between 1967 and 1997, VOI claims, more than 127,000 men and women have participated in their rehabilitation homes, and they have ministered to more than 1.7 million prisoners in the U.S. and around the world. VOI estimates that the 10,900 gang prevention outreach rallies and drama events they produce annually minister to over 2 million people throughout the U.S and the world."

<sup>7</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, interview by author, West Covina, CA, 2010,

<sup>8</sup> Church of the Redeemer, "Church History," [http://www.cotrbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Church\\_History.pdf](http://www.cotrbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Church_History.pdf) (accessed October 17, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Julie Arguinzoni, interview by author, West Covina, CA, October 17, 2016, stated that her great-grandfather attended the Azusa Revival. Although her mother fell away from the Lord at twelve years old, it was her grandparents who shared the great treasure of Jesus with her.

the ministry. Each offspring had their own incredible conversion, and God already had planned their relationship to meet and marry while at Bible college.<sup>10</sup> Such a story is so encouraging to parents who might have unruly and rebellious children. They can find hope in this, especially if they have trained their children in the ways of the Lord and it seems that their teens are drifting in the opposite direction. God is powerful and faithful to His promises (Genesis 28:15). He is known to turn the hearts of kings and courses of rivers to do His will, and nothing is impossible for the person who believes (Proverbs 21:1).

### **The Charismatic Influence of the Reverend David Wilkerson**

In authoring the famous book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, Rev. Wilkerson helped to create a hunger for a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit and caused a stir in the church world.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the modern “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit began to fall upon gang members and drug addicts in New York City—and eventually Arguinzoni, whose spiritual hunger began to grow. The compassion of Rev. Wilkerson and Cruz for lost souls and their constant seeking of God in prayer influenced Arguinzoni and became living practices in his everyday life. The key spiritual practices that Arguinzoni learned—prayer, evangelism, and study of God’s Word—became the three main ingredients that have been displayed in the lives of “Sonny and Julie” and the pioneer generation throughout the history of VOI. Their compassion and burden for junkies and lost humanity have been passed on to

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<sup>10</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, “Pastor Sonny’s Bio: Over 50 Years Reaching the Lost,” <http://www.sonnyarguinzoni.org/sonny-bio.aspx> (accessed October 17, 2016); Sonny Arguinzoni, “Julie Arguinzoni Bio: Founder of Victory Outreach,” <http://www.sonnyarguinzoni.org/julie.aspx> (accessed October 17, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, 2002 rev. and expand. ed., s.vv. “Victory Outreach International.” The beginning of the Charismatic movement in many circles, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, was sparked by the “*The Cross and the Switchblade*.”

those they disciplined.<sup>12</sup> The need for spiritual formation in Christ within a loving and supporting community became an important value and part of VOI's functional framework.<sup>13</sup>

However, before that originated, theological training came while enrolled in the Latin American Bible Institute, which has rooted VOI in ecclesiology that is supported by Pentecostal belief. God in His sovereignty and providence provided the spiritual doctrine and framework that Arguinzoni and his wife were going to need to be able to faithfully lead this new denominational movement. Before they married and separately paralleling what God had been doing in Arguinzoni's life, the realization and manifestation of the VOI narrative started to unfold when J. Arguinzoni felt like setting herself apart to become a missionary to Mexico and enrolled in LABI.<sup>14</sup> Brought together by divine destiny at Latin American Bible Institute, God began their deep journey into spiritual formation.

### **Hispanic Pentecostal Alumni and Their Influence on VOI**

Professors from LABI have been an important part of VOI's theological foundation. The Pentecostal roots of these professors reinforced Victory Outreach's doctrinal beliefs. Their discipleship and training have influenced the personal lives of VOI leaders as well as the corporate body.

Jesse Miranda and Estefan Camarillo are two of many who came and invested in men and women at the beginning of VOI's ministry. Miranda was one of its first teachers of formal training at VOI, which was named "School of the Bible." For decades, Miranda

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<sup>12</sup> I was disciplined by G. Rivera, J. Arguinzoni's brother, and later by S. Arguinzoni.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 109-113.

<sup>14</sup> S. Arguinzoni and J. Arguinzoni, *Treasures out of Darkness*, 73.

has been used of God not only in Assemblies of God (AG) circles but also nationally among Hispanic Protestants and is saluted as the “Grandfather of U.S. Latino Protestantism” by *Christianity Today*.<sup>15</sup> Miranda is the founding president of the multidenominational “Alianza de Ministerios Evangélicos Nacionales” (AMEN)<sup>16</sup> and has served as head of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, an AG executive presbyter, founder of the Latino American Theological Seminary,<sup>17</sup> distinguished professor and director of the Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership at Vanguard University, and past chairperson of the AG Commission on Ethnicity.<sup>18</sup> Miranda brought basic and advanced biblical knowledge to VOI and much teaching on basic leadership.

Another theological influence came through the Reverend Samuel Sanchez, who invested the later years of his life with VOI. Rev. Sanchez arrived after serving faithfully as superintendent of the Southern Pacific District of the Assemblies of God. He attended LABI at the same time as Arguinzoni and his wife and later became dean of the Victory Education Training Institute. Rev. Sanchez began connecting Victory Outreach with established universities and colleges, like Azusa Pacific University, and brought other

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Thompson, “Cuando los sueños universitarios se vuelven realidad,” *Christianity Today*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/en-espanol/cuando-los-sueos-universitarios-se-vuelven-realidad.html> (acceso 20 de octubre del 2016).

<sup>16</sup> AETH-Prolades Research and Information Network on Hispanic Protestant Churches and Ministries, “National Organizations: AMEN (Alianza de Ministerios Evangélicos Nacionales),” [http://www.hispanicchurchesusa.net/listing\\_of\\_hispanic\\_faith\\_networks.htm](http://www.hispanicchurchesusa.net/listing_of_hispanic_faith_networks.htm) (accessed October 20, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Jesse Miranda, “Palabras del fundador,” Latin American Theological Seminary, <http://www.latsca.com/palabras-del-fundador> (acceso 20 de octubre del 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Vanguard University, “Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership,” <http://www.vanguard.edu/undergraduate/jmc/#top> (accessed October 20, 2016).

professors, such as Enrique Zone, to train VOI leaders.<sup>19</sup> God used such men to challenge VOI leaders and their lack of formal education. They have helped to raise leaders to a higher level of academia, which will prove useful in training those in the younger generation who have received the benefit of advanced education.

Together this first group of professors helped VOI to make articulation agreements with LABI in 1995 and later with the School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University. At this time, there was much guidance from Miranda who was serving as the urban director of Hispanic Ministry at Azusa Pacific University. Zone brought the academic bridge program called “Facultad,”<sup>20</sup> under the supervisory purview of the Asociación Teológica Hispana.<sup>21</sup> This brought an ecumenical influence, as the Facultad hosts educators from different denominations, related accredited seminaries, Bible colleges and institutes, and other similar institutions as well as students who are currently preparing to engage in the field of theological education.

Another influential Hispanic Pentecostal was Isaac Canales,<sup>22</sup> whom I have known from LABI and who served Fuller Theological Seminary. After twenty years at Fuller, he spent six years as president of the Latin American Bible Institute. As a mighty exponent of the gospel, preaching throughout the United States cross-culturally and

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<sup>19</sup> Azusa Pacific University, “Enrique Zone, Ed.D.,” under “School of Theology,” <http://www.apu.edu/theology/faculty/ezone/> (accessed October 20, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Facultad de Teología Internacional, “Quienes somos,” <http://www.facultad.edu/somos.html> (acceso 20 de octubre del 2016). Facultad traces its origins from LIFE Bible College.

<sup>21</sup> Asociación Teológica Hispana, “Acerca de ATH,” <http://athispana.com/acerca-de-ath/> (acceso 20 de octubre del 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Mission Ebenezer Family Church, “Senior Pastor,” <http://www.missionebenezer.com/seniorpastor.html> (accessed October 20, 2016).

cross-denominationally, he taught VOI the value of academia in extending the Hispanic people to another level, no matter what handicap they may have in becoming a lifelong learner. He also disciplined me personally as an academic leader. I served as the urban dean of LABI, while Canales was the president of LABI. He encouraged me and opened the door of opportunity for me to enroll in Fuller Theological Seminary in 1995, in the Master of Divinity program from which I graduated in 2005. He also introduced me to Juan F. Martínez,<sup>23</sup> who was serving as Hispanic director at Fuller. Martínez is bringing the next level of academia to VOI through his influence in coaching and mentoring me to pursue my Doctor of Ministry and to bring missional leadership to Victory Outreach churches.<sup>24</sup> Upon graduating, I will be the first VOI leader with a doctoral degree, coming from a gangster and drug background.

These are the men, along with Arguinzoni and VOI elders, who have believed in me and a higher academic future for VOI. As the former director of VOI's Bible school (VOSOM/VETI), which has gone through different stages,<sup>25</sup> I have found it a hard road to be the voice of academia within VOI's ministry, due to its strong leadership style coupled with vision and faith that have driven it to what it is today. Along with other challenges that came with the culture, most of Victory Outreach's first converts were not educated nor did they delight in education, due to lifestyles of anti-social behavior and

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<sup>23</sup> Fuller Studio, "Juan Francisco Martínez: Theology Author," <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/contributor/juan-martinez/> (accessed October 20, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Juan F. Martínez, "OD 777: Biblical Missional Transformation" (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2008); Juan F. Martínez, "OD 712: Latino Cohort Project Planning" (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Victory Outreach International, "Education," <http://victoryoutreach.org/connect/education/> (accessed October 20, 2016).

substance abuse. Academia is not a core value when one grows up with parents who are not educated and face poverty. Such economic challenges force even the smartest students to leave their education to help the family financially. As a result of VOI's founding values in biblical education, I have had the liberty to believe God for people to "Get Equipped, Get Prepared, Get VETI," which has been the new slogan to this now and next generation.<sup>26</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The theological framework of VOI starts with the basic Proverbs 22:6 teaching of training children to be followers of God and to have a vibrant relationship with Him. Raising up the younger generation requires a solid community. The Body of Christ must work in cooperating with one another, as each member supplies vitality and contributes God-given gifts. All need to understand interdependency and how functioning as a team truly works. At VOI, leadership cannot just be a few superheroes who have been around longer than anyone else. If leadership is not shared with the younger generation, VOI will not last beyond its founding fathers. This is the theological mindset and framework that needs to be established in VOI in its discipleship and training of the next generation.

VOI can benefit greatly in remembering the ancient landmarks and biblical foundations its founding fathers and mothers brought, which have guided the ministry to where it is now. While the discipleship factor has played an important value and discipline in VOI ministry, present leaders must not allow followers to look always at

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



them; rather, they must refocus the perspective of their followers ever more on Jesus. Leaders with great charisma and influence can distract us from keeping our eyes focused on Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), no matter how much we love and respect them. Being loyal and faithful to spiritual fathers and mothers means being loyal and faithful to Christ, as Jesus said in John 15:5, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

From its earliest beginnings, the biblical practices of studying God's Word, prayer, evangelism, and one-on-one discipleship have wed with Pentecostal traditions and practice to form the basic foundation for who VOI is and what it does today. Chapters 4 and 5 will present VOI's theological framework and ecclesiology. They will delve more deeply into its specific tenets, explore ecclesiological strengths and weaknesses, and provide a theological foundation for the missional strategy contained in this project.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter provides insight into the theological framework of Victory Outreach International. It identifies the distinctive attributes that define VOI churches and reflects on how the strengths and weaknesses of VOI ecclesiology affect the spiritual formation of congregants. It also explores how a newly forming denomination like VOI must embrace faith as a journey and missional insights to support spiritual formation.

#### **Pentecostal Distinctive**

Pentecostal doctrine is distinguished by its emphasis on baptism in the Holy Spirit, being “subsequent to salvation” and accompanied by the “initial physical evidence” of speaking in tongues. This perspective is grounded in the writings of Luke.<sup>1</sup> Clark H. Pinnock agrees and takes the baptism in the Holy Spirit as his example. He writes: “Luke speaks of a baptism of power for service which is not oriented to the

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas E. Woolley, “Pentecostal Distinctive of Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Lucan Writings: ‘Subsequent to Salvation’ and Speaking in Tongues as ‘Initial Physical Evidence’” (course paper, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Waxahachie, TX, 2008), Doug and Marsha Woolley, [http://dougandmarsha.com/essays-seminary/sagu\\_06\\_pentecostal\\_distinctive.pdf](http://dougandmarsha.com/essays-seminary/sagu_06_pentecostal_distinctive.pdf) (accessed October 20, 2016).

soteriological work of the Spirit, which Paul often addresses.”<sup>2</sup> While Paul talks about the Holy Spirit in relation to salvation (Ephesians 1:13), Luke talks about the Holy Spirit in relation to empowering believers to be effective witnesses for Christ (Luke 21:13). This is highlighted in Acts 1:8, where Jesus mentions it as well as empowering believers to serve Him and people better. These two teachings derived from Acts include Spirit baptism, which comes after salvation and with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

First, in relation to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of “subsequence to salvation” means that there is usually a time separation between a believer’s conversion and the experience of Spirit baptism. The General Council of the Assemblies of God states the doctrine as follows: “The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth.”<sup>3</sup>

Since the word “baptism” refers to a “dipping” or “immersing” in water, then “the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent, powerful, overwhelming immersion in the Holy Spirit. While the New Testament believers sometimes received later infillings of the Spirit (Acts 4:31), ‘baptism’ in the Holy Spirit in all the biblical examples happens only once to an individual.”<sup>4</sup> Gordon L. Anderson presents a good definition and description from a Pentecostal perspective. He writes: “The baptism in the Holy Spirit is significant additional power for life and ministry given by God subsequent to salvation. The Baptism is characterized by a deep sense of the immediacy of God’s presence. By virtue of this, a

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<sup>2</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, “Foreword,” in *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, by Roger Stronstad (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Where We Stand* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub., 2003), 216.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

deep sense of mystery and emotion is often experienced. It is also characterized by speaking in tongues.”<sup>5</sup> This comes from the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in the upper room. This is when the 120 were in the upper room waiting for the promise of the Father (Acts 2:4).

This promise was given to them by Jesus in John 14:26. He said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” The baptism in the Holy Spirit flowed into the growing early Church. For example, Acts 8:1 reports that persecution came upon the Church and they scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. This shows that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the early Church grew in spite of persecution and hardships. God was forming and building His Church, just as He had promised in Matthew 16:18 and confirmed that “the gates of hell shall not prevail.”

Speaking in tongues is an exercise that involves both the Holy Spirit and believers. George M. Flattery correctly observes:

The Holy Spirit inspires the tongues, and people express them in various forms that they have not learned and do not understand. These words may take the forms of human languages, the language of angels, or special purpose tongues or languages. These expressions are not humanly intelligible. Some might call this gibberish, but what the Spirit has inspired is not gibberish. Whatever sounds we utter, God understands, and they are intelligible to Him.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon L. Anderson, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Initial Evidence, and a New Model,” *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200501/200501\\_071\\_BaptismHS.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200501/200501_071_BaptismHS.cfm) (accessed April 23, 2008). Anderson rightly emphasizes that good Christians may have good ministry without the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but Spirit baptism will make a good Christian even more effective by giving “additional power for life and ministry.”

<sup>6</sup> George M. Flattery, “Speaking in Tongues: Its Essence, Purposes, and Use (Part 1),” *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201404/201404\\_013\\_05\\_Tongues\\_pt1.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201404/201404_013_05_Tongues_pt1.cfm) (accessed October 20, 2016).

Pentecostals ground their distinctive doctrine in the experiences and patterns found in the Book of Acts, and so does VOI. The work of the Holy Spirit brings about every miracle of salvation received by an individual through faith in Christ. Scripture clearly shows that without the work and presence of the Holy Spirit, no one can become born again or become a Christian (John 3:5; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:3).

Myer Pearlman states, “One of the most comprehensive definitions of a Christian is that he is a man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.”<sup>7</sup> What that actually means is that any person, empowered by the Holy Spirit, has the supernatural promise, gift(s), and intuition to serve and do the will of the Father, by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They are able to witness boldly. When before that person might have been an introvert and shy to speak in front of people, now with the gift of teaching and exhortation that same individual becomes able to be God’s unshakable vessels of honor. When that happens, it is a great comparison of the transformational change in a person’s life.

As people are influenced by the Holy Spirit, they bring salvation and joy full of the Holy Ghost to every region where they step foot. These were ordinary folk, who had a powerful experience with the third person of the Trinity. The Book of Acts shows the Holy Spirit teaching Christ-followers all things, as they step out in faith and as the master had taught them. It was not only a local vision but a global vision to the entire world (Acts 1:5, 8). With the Lord’s final departure in His ascension, nothing was left to do but

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<sup>7</sup> Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub., 1981), 306.

to wait and pray for the fulfillment of that promise (Acts 1:4). In Acts 2, their prayer was answered in a mighty way.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Spirit brought unity among the believers. This is clearly seen in the distinctive moves of the Holy Spirit in Act 2, as Peter prophetically sounded what Joel prophesied in Joel 2:28-32. First, there is the miracle that came from heaven (Acts 2:4-13). Then followed the powerful sermon that the Apostle Peter preached to the multiethnic group in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-41). The promise came upon the group first, then upon the crowd. The experience of Pentecost is what John B. Pohill terms the “Gift of the Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Lloyd J. Ogilvie, the dynamics of Pentecost were wind, fire, and praise.<sup>10</sup> The presence of the Holy Spirit came down upon the believers with obvious signs, so they would understand that the Father had come through on His promise. He communicated in a way that would be identified immediately and drew attention from the nations that were present. The Word of God is known for using symbolism. Kevin J. Conner says, “Throughout the Bible God used numerous symbols and types to reveal characteristics and shade of meaning that would be lost to the student of the Bible if it were not used. One cannot understand much of the language of the Bible without

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<sup>8</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 95.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 96. Pohill writes: “1. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

<sup>10</sup> Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Acts*, vol. 28 of The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 57.

understanding of the symbol and the language of the type.”<sup>11</sup> When talking about the Holy Spirit, the common human experience of wind, fire, and praise are used relatively to describe different functions of the Holy Spirit.

Collectively, these functions bring a mystery in their manifestations according to its individual characteristic. The wind, as Jesus told the religious leader Nicodemus, blows wherever it pleases; one can hear its sound but not where it comes from or where it is going (John 3:8). In the upper room, a rushing mighty wind came from heaven. It was an immersive sound but not destructive or damaging. It descended from above and filled the whole place (Acts.2:2-4). The tangible presence of a rushing mighty wind swept their souls clean from any doubt and unbelief that might have been clinging to their soul. According to Pearlman, wind symbolizes the regenerative work of the Spirit and is indicative of this mysterious, independent, penetrating, life-giving and purifying operation.<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew word for spirit and wind is *ruach*.<sup>13</sup> Just in trying to pronounce the word, sounds like a guttural sound in clearing the human throat. However, this wind came in its purest form, clearing everything that might hinder the love and power from on high to present to the world from the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Another symbol is just as powerful: fire. In the Old Testament, fire demonstrates pleasing offerings to the Lord that were consumed (Exodus 29:26). Fire also served as a method of purification of metals to remove dross (Proverbs 25:4). Scripture says what

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin J. Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols and Types*, rev. and expand. ed. (Portland, OR: Bible Temple, 1992), v.

<sup>12</sup> Myer Pearlman, *Pentecostal Classics: Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub., 1995), 289.

<sup>13</sup> Ogilvie, *Acts*, 57.

seem to be “tongues of fire” separated and came to rest on each person present (Acts 2:3). The fire symbolizes the Holy Spirit as the source of this gift and could describe the bold, burning, enthusiastic preaching, which would follow.<sup>14</sup> Ogilvie comments:

Fire also illustrates the purging, purification, fiery boldness, and zeal produced by the anointing of the Spirit. These two words, sounds like and seems to be, give a look alike or sound alike description of these two miraculous manifestations. These two symbols seem to give evidence that seem like the real tangible material in comparison but not exactly. Nevertheless, the prophet Joel prophesied these two symbolical signs many years before (Joel 2:28-30). Fire and the Spirit of God are as synonymous as wind and Spirit in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup>

Praise and worship is the one thing that God desires and wants from His creation. This is why Jesus said, “God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). For this reason, the group in the upper room began to glorify God, by speaking His name and proclaiming His wonderful things in the languages of all the nations that were attending the Passover in Jerusalem. God could not have picked a better time and place to let His praises ring out throughout the city.

Praise is a shout of victory in the midst of turmoil and defeat, as when Paul and Silas were beaten and locked up in jail yet sang to Him anyway (Acts 16:25). Peter and John also rejoiced that they were found worthy of being persecuted and beaten, suffering shame for His namesake. There is truly power in praise and worship, especially when done in the face of trials and tribulations. Praise in these circumstances is a sacrifice unto God, something one does, even if one’s flesh is totally against it. This is why the writer to

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<sup>14</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1582.

<sup>15</sup> Ogilvie, *Acts*, 58.



the Hebrews exhorted, “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

Ogilvie says, “The Spirit releases us to praise, and that praise becomes very effective proclamation. It was the sound of the rushing wind that brought the crowds to the area of the Upper Room. Then it was the quality of praise that made them want to know what was happening.”<sup>16</sup> Whenever quality of praise is exhibited and an extreme joy and exuberance is seen, there exists an almost magnetic pull for the Holy Spirit to draw those who hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness. This was the beginning of revival, and the birth of the early Church. In this way, wind, fire, and praise were used by the Holy Spirit to bring revival and plant the early Church, which is chronicled throughout the entire Book of Acts.

The power that came upon the first generation of Jesus’ disciples in the upper room resulted in them speaking in an unknown tongue. Such physical evidence, mentioned in Acts 2:4, helps Christ-followers to know when they are being baptized and serves as visible evidence to people who witness the experience. While this is not the only evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, it proved valuable to Peter and fellow Jews, when the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45).

### **Main Tenets: VOI Tradition**

VOI is uniquely distinguished by its fundamental belief in God’s love and in the transforming power of His love for hurting people and to reach the lost, as mandated by Christ in what is known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), which is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 61.

demonstrated throughout His ministry in the Gospels. Jesus commands His disciples, “Go and make disciples of all nations” and “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Victory Outreach believes that the Spirit of God is actively working still in the edification of the Church through manifestations, such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the empowerment of service, speaking in tongues, and the impartation of spiritual gifts to each believer (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Romans 12:5-8). The beliefs of Victory Outreach can be classified as Evangelical and Pentecostal and adhere to a strict Statement of Faith, which contains nonnegotiable tenets.

The first main tenet of faith is that the Bible is “our all-sufficient rule of Faith and Conduct, in the inspired Word of God.”<sup>17</sup> This means that the entire Word of God is infallible and without error. It is the inspired Word of God that is able to correct, rebuke, and train men and women for every great work that God has for His people (2 Timothy 3:15-16). The Word of God is what VOI uses to equip and develop men and women for the work of the ministry. VOI lives this tenet by applying the truth of God’s Word to their practical everyday living, which transforms their life. For VOI, this is part of what it means to engage in exaltation of God.

Embracing its second main tenet of faith, “the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ,”<sup>18</sup> is another way VOI exalts God. Jesus Christ is seen and known as God—not just as a good teacher, a powerful rabbi, or the son of Mary and Joseph. Scriptures like “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) make it clear that Jesus was presenting himself as God. Paul says

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<sup>17</sup> Victory Outreach International, *Statement of Faith*, under “Our Beliefs,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/vision/our-beliefs/> (accessed October 20, 2016), 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

to the Corinthians that the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ was an obstacle to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (see 1 Corinthians 1:24). This stresses why VOI does not deviate from this truth, which prevents it from straying into a strange sect or cult. The absolute truth of God cannot be negotiated or compromised. VOI accepts this truth and believes that Jesus is God and not a lesser god or a finite man with supernatural powers. VOI believes that Jesus is God and occupies all of the “Omni’s” that pertain to deity: Omnipresence (His presence is everywhere), Omnipotent (He is all powerful), and Omniscient (He is all wisdom, all knowledge, and all sovereign). VOI practices this by accepting, serving, and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This means being obedient to His living Word, which is manifested by a deep devotion and commitment through prayer and other spiritual disciplines. This is because VOI takes to heart the words of Jesus in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The third tenet of faith is “the Sinfulness of Man.”<sup>19</sup> This means that the whole human race is tainted and has been affected by sin (Romans 3:23). That is why the human inclination is usually to do bad and disobey God. The sinful nature wants to do evil, but the regenerated spirit that has been born again wants to do good. Paul offers an illustration of the battle that wars within human beings (see Romans 7:21-25; cf. Psalm 36:1; Jeremiah 17:9). VOI lives this tenet by believing that all people are sinful and need to be saved by accepting Jesus Christ into their lives. It is based on Ephesians 2:8, which reads: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

gift of God.” This foundational belief underlies VOI’s value and ministry of working hard to evangelize those the world tends to ignore. For Jesus, all are worth saving.

The fourth main tenet of faith is the “Sanctification of the believer.”<sup>20</sup> This means through eternal salvation we are to live a holy life unto God in fellowship and service here on earth. Sanctification is both instant and progressive in the life of the saint. This comes from His divine nature, which has been infused into new creatures in Christ at their spiritual birth. It calls for separation from the world and the flesh. Peter writes: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Peter 1:15). VOI congregants live this tenet by distancing themselves from their old environments that previously enticed them into destructive habits and behaviors. This begins through true repentance, which means turning away from what once held one captive to sin and not associating with bad company. This is because “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33). This tenet supports VOI’s value of establishing its members as spiritually mature followers of Christ within the community of the local church.

The fifth main tenet is “the Church and its mission.”<sup>21</sup> This means that the Church are those persons whom God has called and commissioned to go throughout every inner city of the world and make disciples. God is building His Church, and the gates of hell cannot penetrate or hinder its mission and assignments. VOI takes seriously its need to be really committed to the cause of Jesus Christ and corporately preach the gospel though the world, which is the mission and purpose of the Church (Matthew 29:19-20; Mark

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

16:15; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 14:12). VOI lives this tenet by fellowshiping in the local Body of Christ. Fellowship takes shape as people gathering in restaurants, parks, and planned retreats to have close relationships with families, which is healthy for the local Body of Christ. There is a lot of food, fun, and fellowship. VOI respects and carries out the Church's mission by being obedient to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Congregants do this by going into the streets to evangelize and being a witness at their jobs, schools, and marketplaces. In this way, they allow their evangelism to become a lifestyle of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. This tenet supports VOI's value of envisioning its people to be God's ministers in a hurting world.

Overall, there is a strength in the reliance of the Holy Spirit that VOI has seen in the Spirit of the living God when it fell upon the first generation of leaders and congregants. The elite and majority of mainline churches of that day felt insulted, because they did not understand why God would choose indistinctive common folk, minorities from Hispanic and African descent.<sup>22</sup> Since they were ordinary and broken people, some of them lived with failures. However, their failures provide important lessons for today and serve to uncover certain weaknesses—such as pride, arrogance, and selfishness—which lead to actions unbecoming of children of God. As VOI continues to live out its main tenets of faith and bear the life-giving Word of reconciliation, it struggles not to allow the social expectations of the world to govern daily life. This is revealed in its tenets of recognizing the reality of the second coming of Christ (John 14:3; Acts 1:10-11;

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Owens, "The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement begins in America," in *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 45.

Colossians 3:4; Revelation 1:7), defining marriage between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24), and healthy sexuality as legitimately expressed within marriage between one man and one woman who are consenting adults (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). In living out faith, and looking back to their roots, VOI congregants understand the requirement to set aside their own desires and replace them with the desires of God or risk failing to live up to their calling, as many other Pentecostal groups have.<sup>23</sup>

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of VOI Pentecostal Ecclesiology**

Due to the way in which Victory Outreach's ministry was formed, it has a unique ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is the doctrine of the church, but many of its practices and tenets of the faith keep it Pentecostal. VOI's methods may seem strange to a traditional church, but this is due to the populations of people VOI tends to reach with the gospel.

The nature of a church and its ministry—its worship, ordinances, and organization—comprise its ecclesiology. This comes from “the New Testament Greek word for church . . . ‘ecclesia,’ meaning an assembly of called out ones.”<sup>24</sup> The VOI church then is a group of people called out from the world, ghettos, and barrios to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all of their heart, soul, and body (Matthew 22:26-40), within His spiritual body locally and universally. Such followers of Jesus are part of His body, the Body of Christ, His Church. As it says in Scripture, “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).

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<sup>23</sup> Robeck, Jr., *Azusa Street Mission and Revival*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Pearlman, *Pentecostal Classics*, 345.

The Pentecostal ecclesiology of VOI has certain strengths. One key strength of VOI's Pentecostal ecclesiology is a strong reliance on the Holy Spirit. To sustain their evangelistic activity and deep walk with Christ, VOI churches depend totally on the power of the Holy Spirit to give them boldness and the words to speak and be witnesses for Jesus throughout the world. The boldness that comes upon congregants and resides within them, giving them strong faith in a living God, becomes the Comforter (*Paráklēsis*).<sup>25</sup> In the most treacherous and perilous ghettos of the world, He is the one who is called on for help. This has replaced the previous sense of tribal security that resided within us in the days before Christ, when we needed an association with gangs to feel a deep sense of protection and not being alone. Now this same sense of security is found in serving the chief commander of the world, Jesus. This is why VOI sees itself as a collection of soldiers for Christ.

Another ecclesiological strength that VOI has is its fervor for evangelism. This comes from a constant witness of seeing individuals being delivered instantly from drugs and other life-controlling lifestyles. Because of the people group that VOI reaches, its methods are unique in the sense of its radicalness and bold proclamation of truth to a world in need. In reaching the hardcore and marginalized of the inner cities, power encounters with signs and wonders that only the Holy Spirit can manifest is really the only thing that can melt stone-cold hearts and bring converts to Christ in the presence of

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<sup>25</sup> *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, 2010 ed., s.v. "comforter." "From the word 'comforter' John 14:15. *paraklhtoj parakletos* {par-ak'-lay-tos} Meaning: 1) summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid 1a) one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate 1b) one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor 1b1) of Christ in his exaltation at God's right hand, pleading with God the Father for the pardon of our sins 1c) in the widest sense, a helper, succourer, aider, assistant 1c1) of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom."

God. This reflects the same dependency in Acts 4:29 that Peter and John prayed for. Together they lifted their voices in praise to God, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly (Acts 4:29-31).

Another key strength in VOI Pentecostal ecclesiology is holiness, which is highly prized and demonstrated. VOI's evangelistic power, strength, and boldness only flow through congregants because they live in the fear of God. This means living in the reality that once congregants commit their life to God and repent from a sinful life, they need to consciously make wise decisions not to associate with the world (1 John 2:15), nor cater to the flesh (Galatians 6:8), nor pay heed to Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), which previously held them in bondage. Paul says in Romans 12:1-2, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." This means giving one's whole body as a living sacrifice to God. It is not to be subjected to divisiveness, broken living, and polluted service. This needs to be an ongoing activity.<sup>26</sup>

When people who come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are identified with His death and resurrection by water baptism, they need to make a serious quality decision to follow Him completely. That means not getting involved in this present age, its philosophies and fashions that are contrary to God's Word (Colossians 2:8). This is because believers reside with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). They are not to

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<sup>26</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 27 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 232.



set their thinking on the world but rather embrace holiness, so they will not be drawn away from the Church and the presence of God (Hebrews 10:25). Jesus explained it well in Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

Living a compromising self-centered life with no values and no goals opposes growth in holiness. The Church is the light of the world and the salt of the earth, so it can demonstrate God’s intention for the human race. To be culturally identified with the world is to place the church at risk, says Robert H. Mounce.<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes agrees and made this comment over 130 years ago:

It is the duty of men to seek the honor of this infinitely wise and Holy God. It commends itself to every man’s conscience. God has formed us all; and man can have no higher destiny and honor than to be permitted to promote and spread abroad through all the universe the knowledge of a Being whose character is infinitely lovely, whose government is just, and whose presence and favor will release blessings of salvation and eternal peace on all the wide creation that will be obedient to his will.<sup>28</sup>

In upholding power and holiness as a VOI strength in its Pentecostal ecclesiology, leaders have found much resistance and struggles to obtaining victory in the area of holiness, because it deals so intimately with spiritual formation and character development. Such resistance and struggle often have taken the form of spiritual warfare, which is a reality in Christianity (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Therefore, becoming proficient in spiritual warfare is another ecclesiological strength that VOI has developed in order to fight this invisible conflict within two

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1884-1885), 262.

kingdoms: God's eternal kingdom and Satan's temporary world. Paul cautions in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that believers should not be ignorant of Satan's wiles. VOI encounters spiritual warfare when it goes to the streets, and this is why prayer has been one of its essential values and practices. Leaders teach men and women who enter the Inner City Recovery Homes to pray, intercede, and develop a spiritual discipline for one hour of prayer. They need to be holy, have the power of the Holy Spirit, and be fully dressed in God's impenetrable armor (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Christians are in spiritual warfare, battling with invisible forces that are real and oppose every believer who stands for righteousness and advancing the kingdom of God. False spirituality blinds the unbeliever and deceives the believer (2 Corinthians 4:4; Romans 7:11). The Bible speaks about Satan being the prince and power of the air, and the god of this world also, so he does have limited power. God is the overall power, and He causes His people to triumph over him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony (Revelations 12:11).<sup>29</sup>

Despite its strengths, there are some weaknesses in VOI Pentecostal ecclesiology. These include a lack of formal academic training to strengthen Pentecostal experience and doctrines and autocratic leadership, which stems from our culture and background. These combine to form an overriding challenge that VOI consistently faces in reaching the people that God has called it to reach.

Most VOI congregants come to Christ with a general lack of education and healthy upbringing. VOI faces challenges to promote literacy to high school dropouts,

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<sup>29</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989), 131.

family values to dysfunctional and domestically violent families, and optimistic visions and dreams to pessimists with low self-esteem. Preparing a generation for the future from this group is a challenge that requires lots of work and prayer.

Another weakness of VOI Pentecostal ecclesiology is spiritual formation that comes through teaching doctrine and engaging in its defensible practice. As Pentecostals, the label has been given to us that we are emotional and not knowledgeable in biblical theology.<sup>30</sup> Until recently, perhaps a generation ago, Pentecostalism was seen as a movement of “illiterates,” “hillbillies,” “rednecks,” “snake-handlers,” or “holy rollers,” who were at the margins of culture and would remain there without needing or leaving literature of much notice to be read.<sup>31</sup> This stereotype happened because at the time there were not as many books written from a Pentecostal perspective as there are today.<sup>32</sup>

VOI’s weakness in the area of doctrine stemmed from how it basically developed in the beginning: practice based on experiences of Spirit-led power and dynamic transformation, without any challenges of academic pursuits. This is the reason why some did not take the biblical-theological challenge seriously. Everybody had different yet powerful testimonial experiences. They were so dynamic and miraculous that some people were just going around sharing their powerful testimonies in the beginning of VOI’s ministry, with little to no biblical foundation. Later, this caused new believers to end up falling away from the faith.

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<sup>30</sup> Roebeck, Jr., *Azusa Street Mission & Revival*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academia, 1987), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Some of these can be found in the Bibliography.

This weakness in ecclesiology caused VOI to be viewed in the beginning as a shallow, illiterate bunch of rowdy converts calling themselves a “church.”<sup>33</sup> It was viewed by established denominations as just a salvation storefront, which probably would offer soup lines and shelter for the homeless but never grow beyond that. To try and combat this weakness, Victory Outreach has relied on the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29: “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

Although the value of academia has been in the hearts of VOI founders, VOI members are from a group of people who in the majority were lacking in spiritual formation and doctrine and did not have positive experiences with education in general. Power and dynamic experiences with the Holy Spirit are simply not enough. While they may launch a spiritual journey with gusto and excitement, strong foundations concerning biblical truths are needed for longevity in the journey with Christ.

Acknowledging weaknesses in general is difficult for VOI congregants, which forms another ecclesiological weakness for the emerging denomination. Most congregants come from an ambience that prides itself in power and strength. The supremacy, influence, and authority that come from belonging to a dominant gang— together with prideful attitudes—are required for survival in this environment as well in prison life and generally rough neighborhoods and ghettos of the inner cities. Moreover,

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<sup>33</sup> S. Arguinzoni, *Sonny*, 195.

the Hispanic culture comes with the machismo attitude that “men do not cry” (*el hombre no llora*). This also contributes to people not feeling comfortable with mutual confession (James 5:16) and acknowledging character flaws. These inner attitudes and manners need to be dealt with, and they mostly are faced within Inner City Recovery Homes but are not part of the DNA of all VOI churches.

However, the power and strength of God come upon His people when they acknowledge their weaknesses to God and one another. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:10 “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Members of VOI only can be made strong in Him, when they begin to see weakness as a source of God’s strength. One of the most distinctive preparations for the powerful and persevering work of ministry, which Paul accomplished, was recognizing his feebleness and not being intimidated by it.<sup>34</sup> The consciousness of his own weaknesses led him to cast himself unreservedly upon the divine help. Paul’s constant contending with some distressing bodily infirmity was the connection of his human weakness with God’s strength. He did not go in his own strength, but in God’s strength.<sup>35</sup> In Acts 1:8, the Bible says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Another VOI weakness has been its strong leadership hierarchy. Namely, all authority and direction come from the top. Now that can be good or can become bad. As

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph S. Exell, *1 Corinthians*, vol. 2 of *The Biblical Illustrator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1973), 494.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

the organization begins to grow and people begin to mature in their leadership capacity and skills, empowerment needs to be released and shared with emerging leaders. As a result of the first two weaknesses, the under-emphasis of biblical knowledge and academic training, many VOI leaders are undeveloped with respect to teaching the Word, since they only have their life experience to draw upon. This has caused a lack of skills and knowledge to take churches and their ministries to another level.

This is probably the reason why most VOI churches range within seventy to three hundred members. After having an interview with Arguinzoni in the summer of 2014,<sup>36</sup> I began to think on the things that he mentioned to me, that many of our men are faithful and great evangelists but are not leaders. The capacity of their leadership and their thought process has not grown, so their faith is limited. “Faith comes by hearing and by hearing the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). If consumption of His Word is lean, then both leaders and congregants do not have understanding. When this happens, it becomes difficult to lead people into greener pastures (Psalm 23:1-2). Leaders need to step out and take risks. They cannot take people where they have not been. Arguinzoni also mentioned in this interview that leaders need to take risks and then remain open to making necessary adjustment along the way. If this humble and teachable attitude is not taken, a leader’s capacity will never grow. The tendency will be to stay safe and secure and not launching out into the deep, where one continues to see and experience great things in the Lord.

Another thing to consider is if the concepts of servant leadership and team spirit are not taught and understood within proper biblical balance, individuals—especially

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<sup>36</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, interview by author, West Covina, CA, 2014.

those with passive temperaments—can just become “yes” men and women for fear of being classified as rebellious and indifferent. This is where VOI’s strong leadership hierarchy has played into its ecclesiological weakness. Such a dynamic is unhealthy, faithless, and fed by faithfulness and loyalty stemming from a barrio culture and subcultural groups of gangs based on neighborhood loyalty. As times are changing, so are leadership management and organizational structures. When VOI seeks to coordinate human behavior, it does so hierarchically. This is a military philosophy, “positional authority based on hierarchy.”<sup>37</sup>

Having the ecclesiological insights of becoming missional is very important, in order to identify the transforming qualities that need to be transmitted into the younger generation intentionally and deliberately. These insights bring discernment within the community of faith and find expression as wanting to grow in the faith. When this happens, transformation can come into the lives of VOI congregants.

This means strongly emphasizing change and renewal of the mind through this journey of faith with God in His given destiny and purpose for our lives. In order for this journey to begin to make sense, VOI leaders and congregants first must be that living sacrifice unto God, which is the reasonable service of worship to God. Great care must be taken not to conform to the ways of the world but to start renewing the mind (Romans 12:1-2), by memorizing Scripture and applying truth to everyday life. Then, as Paul says

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<sup>37</sup> Jeff Haden, “Traditional Leadership Hierarchies Are Dead, or Should Be,” *Inc.*, <http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/traditional-leadership-hierarchies-are-dead-or-should-be.html> (accessed October 20, 2016).

in Romans 12:2, present and future generations will be able to discern “the good, acceptable and perfect will of God” for their lives.

### **Missional Innovation through Intentional Christian Transgenerational Community Discipleship**

Missional innovation can occur through intentional discipleship from one generation to the next within a community context. This is particularly evident with the Timothy principle in action (2 Timothy 2:2). The Timothy principle is the method of discipling men and women, who will reproduce after their kind. The first requirement that Scripture calls for is that the believing man or woman needs to be faithful. Paul mentions this in 2 Timothy 2:1-2. He writes: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” This involves a commodity, “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses,” which is the Word of God. Paul means the gospel, or, more broadly, the apostolic teaching that God changed him to proclaim and teach. He also repeats this to the Philippians: “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

In VOI’s origination to be intentional, methods and principles need to be cultivated in an embryo environment with leadership that is biblical in context. This requires “missional imagination” that is presented among a community of God’s people. Missional imagination is re-tooling, re-visioning, and refocusing and seeing the big picture in thinking through the missional church and ways in which the church can move towards its ministry focus. The missional leader cultivates a sense of awareness in the



people's imagination of what God is doing new in their lives now.<sup>38</sup> Having faith and responsibility, missional leaders foster an environment within which the people of God can thrive and transmit God's truth, principles, and values to the next generation of people.<sup>39</sup> This involves the substance of God's purposes and plans for His people. In other words, the community must identify and embrace mature believers to cultivate and give the next generation all the things they need to thrive and make it in the Christian life.

It is important to remember that the Holy Spirit guides transformation. This means recognizing that it is the Spirit's ministry to bring about changed lives, transformed communities, and redemptive ministry in the world.<sup>40</sup> The Church is the only organization that exists for its nonmembers, in that the Church has been called out to witness to the world. The Holy Spirit empowers members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12) to carry out this witness and serve as ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), reconciling the world to the Father through His Son Jesus Christ.

In building relationship for discipleship, it needs to be intentional for biblical reproduction of the same values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry. In his commentary, Philip H. Towner mentions how Timothy was to take care of his salvation, along with the principles that Timothy inherited from his mother and grandmother (2

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<sup>38</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 151.

Timothy 1:5).<sup>41</sup> This is “the good deposit” that Timothy is instructed to “guard” in 2 Timothy 1:14. Tending to one’s “deposit” keeps it dynamic and life-giving. This enables the deposit to be passed on to the next generation of leaders.

False teachers were attempting to make Timothy change and revise his message. He probably was being intimidated, which is why Paul tells him not to discount his gift simply because he is younger than most leaders (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul offers words of encouragement in 2 Timothy 1:7, reminding the new leader that God has not given him the spirit of fear but of “love, power, and a sound mind.” Fear must be resisted, because God’s Word is the final word. “For this reason, God spoke through specially chosen servants (prophets, apostles, His Son) who together form the standard measuring the purity of the message in each generation. Paul himself was part of the standard, and what he taught Timothy had the approval of the Apostles” (Galatians 2:2-10).<sup>42</sup>

Paul also envisions a process of entrusting his ministry to the next generation. This occurs in the same place where Paul speaks of the “good deposit,” in 2 Timothy 1:14. This is the guarding of the gospel and leadership of the next generation. This is intentional discipleship, and it requires being faithful and reliable. Paul has used the term “faithful” to describe himself (1 Timothy 1:12) and Christ (2 Timothy 2:13). Reliability characterizes believers as people who have the marks of true faith in Jesus and who do not succumb to false teachings. Such teachers could not be trusted with the task Paul

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<sup>41</sup> Philip H. Towner, “Links in the Chain of Ministry (2:1-2),” in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, eds. Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 169-171.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

speaks of here.<sup>43</sup> That is of preaching the gospel to every creature. Paul calls this task a great responsibility that has been granted to us by Jesus Christ. Present leaders are the link to the next generation, and it all starts with faithfulness in the here and now. Their commitment to God carries them the distance, with longevity in ministry. Such ministers, preachers, and teachers are able to accomplish the task of communicating and applying their faith in their generation and in preparing the next generation to continue in VOI's legacy. Part Three presents the missional ministry strategy that does exactly this.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEVELOPING A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOI CHURCHES

This chapter develops a theological framework for transgenerational discipleship groups. The framework brings understanding and biblical application of truth, with the intention of transmitting sound theology to future generations. This in essence is an impartation of life to life, through intentional discipleship, and transmits vision and passion through God's truth by showing the image of God, so that transformation can occur. God through the Trinity provides for the needs of the social community through His image, which is evidenced in Christian community. God created humans in His image and populated them to live in households and communities. God's values and principles are demonstrated and shared among individuals in the family and community.

#### **The Image of God in the Inner City**

An urban theological framework to reach the inner cities is needed today. Through His image, through His Church, God becomes real to the people in the inner city by meeting their needs. His image extends into a fatherless society that finds themselves

abandoned, lost, and bewildered. The Father's love is felt by these invisible rejected people that the city does not want to acknowledge or recognize, sometimes due to the sore aesthetics and reputation it gives their city; but to God and through His people, they are precious (1 Peter 2:4). God's dedicated and committed people, the Church, are meant to reveal His image (Colossians 3:10-12). Human communities are made up of human beings who were created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Those who follow Jesus are called to launch out into community outreach, because of His love and compassion for lost humanity (Matthew 9:35-38). This is where the image of God touches and meets the needs of the people in the inner city. This is the first and basic foundation of social ministry. It is VOI's aim: to bring God's values of family and salvation and carry them into our household and churches.

The Trinity is a mystery but a reality to the Christian believer. The Bible teaches that God is one and that besides Him there is no other (Deuteronomy 6:4). However, the word "Trinity" gives the meaning of "three" through the use of the prefix "tri-." This is the grand mystery, since there is only one God. "The answer is the Divine Unity, it is a compound unity and there is really three distinct persons, every one of whom is the Godhead, yet supremely conscious of the other two."<sup>1</sup> The members of the Trinity are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They co-exist, eternally with one another; they are of the same essence, in diversity and unity. Paul introduces the concept of the Trinity in the context of an exhortation in Galatians 3:1-5:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes *Jesus Christ* was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you:

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<sup>1</sup> Pearlman, *Pentecostal Classics*, 68.

Did you receive the *Spirit* by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the *Spirit*, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? Does *God* give you his *Spirit* and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? [emphasis mine]

Here Jesus as Son is linked with the Holy Spirit, given by God. Paul follows up in Galatians 4:6 and references the Father: “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.” With the implication of the Father, he links all three Persons in the Trinity.

Another Scripture that has many layers<sup>2</sup> and discusses the Trinity is John 1:1-18, which demonstrates His incarnation. It tells that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God and became flesh and dwelt among His creation” and how “the Son, who came from the Father, [was] full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-2), as “Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, His Father” (John 1:14). These passages show the presence of the Father and Son in unity. They inhabit and work together to accomplish God’s divine design in the universe (cf. John 16:7-15).<sup>3</sup>

The Word made His dwelling among humanity. “More literally translated, the Greek verb *skēnoō* means that the Word pitched His tabernacle, or lived in His tent, among human beings. For Greek-speaking Jews and other readers of the Greek Old Testament, the term would call to mind the *skēnē*, the tabernacle where God met with Israel before the temple was built.”<sup>4</sup> God gave Moses direct commands regarding how the tabernacle was going to be built, with all its furnishings (Exodus 25:9). Similarly, God

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<sup>2</sup> Further layers will be discussed in the next section entitled “The Trinity: God as Social Reality.”

<sup>3</sup> *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 2001 ed., s.vv. “Before he became man.”

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 127.

today furnishes His people with specific guidance and all the resources they need to invite His presence into their lives by His precious Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:20-21).

This Scripture shows that Jesus dwelled among His people. The words “made His dwelling among humanity” mean “residence” but often refer to the glory of God who made himself present in the tabernacle and the temple.<sup>5</sup> The Greek verb *skēnoō* means that the Word pitched His tabernacle, or lived in His tent with humanity.<sup>6</sup> “Whether the allusion in John 1:14 is to the tabernacle or to the tent of meeting, the result is the same: now John implies God has chosen to dwell amongst his people in a yet more personal way, in the Word-become-flesh”<sup>7</sup>

This is how God becomes real to His people. He is, as His name says, Immanuel, “God with us.” *Immanuel* is a Hebrew masculine name that means “God with us.” It appears only twice in the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8) and once in the New Testament (Matthew 1:23), where it is sometimes spelled as “Emmanuel.” In the Old Testament, God intermingles with His people throughout the battles with their enemies. An example is when David fought Goliath. Strength, power, and guidance were with David as he trusted the Lord, whom he knew (1 Samuel 17:46). However, the most significant application is in the prophecy of the birth of the incarnate God, Jesus the Messiah, as shown in the word “Emmanuel” in Matthew 1:23 and general manifestation of the God as paraclete to the Body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, third person of the Trinitarian Godhead (Acts 9:31).

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 127-128.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

These passages truly reveal the social-communal reality that the Triune God wants *koinonia* with His creation. It is no coincidence that Jesus picked a Samaritan and a Jew in telling the story of loving one's neighbor (Luke 10:33-36). Jews did not see the Samaritans as their neighbors. Samaritans were half-breeds and viewed as the scum of the earth. They were the outcasts of society. Jesus said "neighbors" are particularly those people whom one ignores, those from whom one separates. There is fear and difficulty in loving those we feel do not love us.<sup>8</sup> In Matthew 5:26 Jesus challenges the concept of love and asks, "If you love only those who love you, what reward will you get?" (Matthew 5:46). Anybody can love without strain nice and courteous people. Loving those who are "unlovable" is how the needs of the people in the inner city are met. When the abandoned and fatherless begin to feel and see the image of God transcending throughout the community, it can become a social reality of love and care.

In observing this, the urban challenge is real, with many more challenges that come along within every major inner city of the world: immigration, migration, deportation, coupled with domestic challenges. The ecclesiastical institute needs to adapt to a 24/7 ministry, but it can seem endless. This is because true love in the style of Jesus goes deeper than just ministering to Sunday worshippers. It means introducing the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and allowing Him to serve and love through one's life. Only through the fullness of the Trinity can a theological framework develop in family households and communities that transform a city one family at a time, through intentional discipleship.

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<sup>8</sup> John M. Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 112.



## The Trinity: God as Social Reality

The Trinity is truly a mystery. Mysteries exist in biblical Christianity but Christianity as “revealed religion” focuses on revelation—and revelation, by definition makes manifest rather than concealing.<sup>9</sup> As three distinct Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are manifested in Scripture as God, while at the same time the entirety of the Bible strictly holds to the Jewish *Sh'ma*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4).<sup>10</sup> In Hebrew, “one” is *'echad*, which can mean a compound or complex unity. This is how unity happens in relationship.

Relationship creates social reality. Now here are some relational aspects found in Scripture. John 1:1 is a bit revealing. John introduces the Trinity as a social reality in his Gospel, with revelation of the Word. He writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Here John carries over the thought beyond the beginning of creation in time to eternity. The verb “was” translates from the Greek *en*, the imperfect of *eimi*, which means “to be.” It appears three times in this verse and “conveys the concept that neither God nor the *Logos* has a beginning: their existence together has been and is continuous.”<sup>11</sup>

Stanley M. Horton explains how the second part of the verse continues, “And the Word was with God (*pros ton theon*).” The *Logos* has existed with God in perfect fellowship throughout all eternity. The word *pros* (with) reveals the intimate relationship

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<sup>9</sup> John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley M. Horton, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: Logos Press, 1998), 146.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

and social reality that the Father and the Son always have shared. The gospel evangelist informs by revelation that the Word entered the realm of history. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14 a). Jesus of Nazareth, “God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:18b).

Paul introduces and identifies Jesus as the God of providence and eternity. “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). Jesus is everywhere present (Matthew 18:20) and unchanging (Hebrew 13:8). Jesus also identifies himself as the sovereign “I am” (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 13:14).<sup>12</sup> This means God is outside time yet inside every moment in all places.

Now the third Person of the Trinity comes into play, and claims full deity for the Holy Spirit. In John 14:16, Jesus says, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another counselor to be with you forever.” Here He calls on the Holy Spirit, “*allon parakléton*, (another helper of the same kind as himself).”<sup>13</sup> Jesus affirmed that everything said about His nature can be said of the Holy Spirit also. Therefore, the Bible testifies to the deity of the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity.

The profound and exciting part of the revelation of the Trinity is manifested in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. It reveals the interrelationships of the three members of the Trinity. Luke, being a doctor with a detailed mind, offers this account: “The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 151.

This means the birth of God in the flesh came as Jesus wrapped in flesh, who grew in stature and wisdom (Luke 2:52) and ministered to humanity in His community and regions around. He became the social welfare reality of the people, by meeting their needs wherever He positioned Himself to be (Luke 4:38-42).

Jesus places the three members of the Godhead on the same divine plane. For this reason, He commands His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Here is where the interrelating of the Trinity becomes evident. The Father’s role appears as supreme authority, from where all divine power comes, but He exists among equals. The Son defers to the primary power and authority of the Father, but both He and the Holy Spirit carry it with them equally. The resulting social reality of the Trinity is unity in diversity.

This is why the image of God in the inner city is so vital today. This truth has a great impact in the inner city where multitudes of fatherless children reside. Scripture says that God is “a Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalms 68:5a). The Father always has been reaching into humanity, because as part of the Trinity He created community. In God’s image, human beings were created for community. Consequently, the conscientious Christian sees all people of the community as the focus of Christian concern and outreach. This is the essence of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

#### Human Beings: Created for Community

God created the human race to be in community, since the beginning of time. The infinite God was not alone, even before He started creating finite beings. The Triune God always has been in unity and in fellowship. If God created human beings in His image,

then they are created to have fellowship with one another. This is the core characteristic of family and community. The Great Commission gives a plan to reach out into the boundaries that eventually target the whole world. This means keeping a clear and focused vision and remaining cautious that familiarity and prejudices do not blind the past, along with problems, trends, and new possibilities.

Conscientious Christians see the invisible people in the community. This stems from the empathy and understanding of being a follower of Jesus and walking in His footsteps. He ministered to the invisible people of His era. When Jesus reached into the life of the Samaritan woman, she was considered a half-breed to the Jews and a promiscuous outcast: Jesus said to her, “The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” To the community she was a person that could be invisible. Although she did not exist to the public square, Jesus not only saw her physical external status but her inner need (John 4:7-18). Another biblical example is when Jesus forgave the adulterous woman. She was regarded as guilty according to the Law and was to be stoned, but Jesus intervened and pointed to her male accusers carrying out justice and said, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). Jesus saw the rejects of society, the marginal outcasts whom communities want to eliminate, because they give a bad image of their society.

In analyzing the intangible forces that form cities, the social, economic, political, and religious forces operating in the community affect individual lives and households in the city. These forces may be intangible, but they are real barriers in human beings who were created for community. Such barriers include poverty (John 12:8), sickness, and even

racism (James 5:14; Philippians 2:3). Jesus knew that reaching them, and in developing the ministry of outreach in the community, it was important for these factors to be known.

The need is great and sometimes the voices are not heard by the people who can make the difference in the city, while still others are in denial. The outcasts are the silent voices that need to be heard and represented, due to the unjust and unequal world that they live in. Using their reality and information, Jesus initiated conversations with a wide variety of people from every segment of community of urban life. Such examples include His conversation with the man with leprosy. The leper spoke his faith in Jesus, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy (Matthew 8:2-3). Jesus also stopped to chat with two blind men who hungered for their sight. They sought Him, “and Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes, immediately they received their sight and followed him” (Matthew 20:33-34). He elevated those who were downtrodden and stuck in poverty. When Jesus saw a “poor widow” put in “two very small copper coins” as an offering, He made sure her story and godly example would be told to millions across time: “‘Truly I tell you,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on’” (Luke 21:1-4). With these examples, Jesus identified community locations and highlighted the need to strengthen community ministry outreach. This is the practical theology VOI uses when ministering to the marginalized today. VOI figures out where they live, makes an agreement on the boundaries for ministry, and creates a special map of target areas for evangelism.

However, physical characteristics alone do not define a community. In many places, major institutions are more influential in shaping people's lives. In His ministry, Jesus recognized the influential role of the Roman Empire and the religious system in His time. In Matthew 22:21, he explains to the religious leaders who wanted to trap him, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Here He specified the ambience of the community and institutions. It is important to explore social analysis and identify major institutions that impact and have implications for community ministry. Effective ministry is rooted in a comprehensive understanding of communities where Christians live and serve,<sup>14</sup> just as Jesus exhibited a deep comprehension of where to draw the lines and how to interact with the socioeconomic environment of His time.

This is what VOI means about not being a "Victory Outreach city." The ambience or institutions that make up that city do not breed or magnetically draw marginalized people to such places. Even though there may be a small percentage of these invisible people with anti-social problems, using drugs or hidden corruption in that city, for the most part city officials do not want to stigmatize their city as "the city with drugs and crime." The hurting and marginalized are everywhere and hunger for belonging.

The impact of all of this provides a framework for family values that come directly from the Triune God. God has disclosed Himself to the human race, by His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16). He was the visible image of the invisible God, who sought out socially invisible people to fill with His glory (Colossians 1:15). "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days

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<sup>14</sup> John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path towards Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications, 1993), 144-145.

he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:12). The relational Triune God has poured out His divine general revelation through His creation through nature and His special personal revelation through His Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that it can become a human reality to share such intimacy and salvation with the world.

### The Household of God: Family Value

The Triune God who created humans in His image has become a reality in the urban cities of the world through social relationships. God created human beings to become integrated into a community. This community is divided into family units, in which the family roles of father, mother, brother, and sister together have value and create an overriding truth. It does not matter what race, religion, or nationality to which one belongs, all human beings belong to a family. Such households are a universal social reality that God sanctions in the garden. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Paul mentions how to behave in God’s household. He writes: “If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15b). He also mentioned that “every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). This means that without the intentionality of keeping the peace in unity of the Holy Spirit, division will subtly come in and divide. The fallen human nature inclines downward and away from God and harmony, yet to be carnally minded is death. This is why bringing the image and presence

of the Father, through the reality of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the city is vital and essential. It is the pillar and foundation of all truth. If those who follow Christ have strong families, they can join in unity to form strong churches to impact their cities.

Family has been one of the major values in VOI, from the beginning. This theological precept has bonded its members in unity throughout the decades. Coming from dysfunctional families, and some with no families, VOI has become a family for them. For this reason, VOI purposely has named its rehabilitation centers “homes.” This is intended to establish a family ambience and safe setting. All men in the home are called “brothers,” and females in the women’s home are called “sisters.” This is also why VOI refers to its leaders as spiritual fathers and mothers in the faith.

This is based on how Timothy was Paul’s spiritual son. There was such a close bonding relationship between Paul and Timothy that he mentions it in his letter to the Philippians: “For I have no one like him [no one of so kindred a spirit] who will be so genuinely interested in your welfare and devoted to your interests. For the others all seek [to advance] their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (the Messiah)” (Philippians 2:20-22 AMP).<sup>15</sup> It was Timothy’s attitude and right and pure heart that set him apart from the other disciples. In hearing for the first time the purity and power of the gospel, a people who deserved nothing and had nothing coming, something begins to surface up from within, a heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness towards VOI spiritual parents and their ministry who took us in at our worst. Our very first words when we testify is “I want to

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<sup>15</sup> *Holy Bible: Amplified Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965).



thank God for my salvation.” This family value has worked very well within VOI’s ministry and has cultivated respect and honor among the brethren.

The VOI family carries a kindred spirit in all its churches, like the one found in Philippians 2:20. Even traveling to the other side of the world to another continent, where another language is spoken, one still can feel that kindred spirit right away, because family is a value. It is like having an extended family all over the world, and everyone sees VOI’s founding father, “Pastor Sonny,” as the apostle and spiritual father or grandfather for many in the ministry. Such extensions of family are given even to “great-grandfather” Rev. Wilkerson and “grandfather” evangelist Cruz. This is the VOI heritage.

Another family aspect of the household of God is a strong discipleship factor. Family and discipleship go hand in hand. Discipleship is the state of being a lifelong learner and coming under someone’s mentoring in spiritual disciplines and tutelage in biblical learning and application. It is as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”<sup>16</sup> Discipleship is the fleshing out of 2 Timothy 2:2<sup>17</sup> and Philippians 2:9.<sup>18</sup> It involves being trained by someone who is a little further along in the things of God. According to Sanders, “The word disciple means ‘a learner,’ in the Greek ‘mathetes’ but Jesus infused into that simple word a wealth of

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<sup>16</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 59.

<sup>17</sup> *NIV Pastor’s Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), presents 2 Timothy 2:2 as the following: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* It also presents Philippians 4:9 as the following: “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

profound meaning. As used by Him and by Paul, it means a learner or pupil who accepts the teachings of Christ, not only in belief but also in lifestyle.”<sup>19</sup>

Jesus’ method of discipleship is seen in His work of always healing the broken and disheartened. His mission statement of ministry can be read in Luke 4:18-21:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

In referencing Isaiah 61:1-2 within the synagogue context, Jesus was bringing the past into the future. He demonstrated the living of this mission statement in His practical life and throughout His ministry, according to the guidance of God. Jesus even prayed to the Father up on the mountainside, before choosing His disciples (Mark 3:3-19). In relating with the twelve men—who are from different types of backgrounds and with distinct temperaments—Jesus’ giftedness, discernment, patience, longsuffering, and faith revolutionized these men to spark the greatest spiritual epic revival in all of history. The ultimate and bottom line of gathering these men to associate with His purpose of world evangelism was really a call to discipleship. To follow their Rabbi and be covered by His dust was the traditional saying within the Jewish community that one was being discipled by a rabbi. “The idea is that as you walked behind your rabbi, he would kick up dust and

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<sup>19</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship*, 8.

you would become caked in it and so following your rabbi closely came to symbolize your commitment and zeal.”<sup>20</sup>

The faces of Jesus’ disciples must have been caked with mud. They lived together, like a recovery home on the road. They ate together (John 13:1-17), went to the synagogue together (Matthew 9:18), prayed together (Matthew 6:5-15), and ministered together (Mark 8:1-13). The group probably was not the easiest to work with, given its diversity of temperaments and personalities (Matthew 8:26; 16:8). On one side of the spectrum there was Peter, totally sparky, aggressive, and tough (Matthew 14:27-19); and on the other side was mellow John, the melancholy, introverted and passive (John 21:2). Before choosing to follow Jesus, Matthew had turned on his people and had worked collecting taxes for the oppressive Roman government (Matthew 10:3). Then there were a couple of zealots who wanted to capsize the Roman government and establish God’s kingdom now (Matthew 10:4). Nevertheless, Jesus created a dream team from these misfits, although they were known as unlearned men (Acts 4). They were just common folk, ordinary fellows that God’s sovereignty choose to turn the world right side up.

Jesus’s process of discipleship included training them, sending them out, and then debriefing them with adjustments and corrections. This process is shown clearly with the seventy-two disciples of Jesus throughout Luke 10. After they returned with victory in evangelism and spiritual warfare, Jesus taught them further: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and

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<sup>20</sup> Lois Tverberg, “Covered in the Dust of Your Rabbi: An Urban Legend,” *Our Rabbi Jesus: His Jewish Life and Teaching*, entry posted January 27, 2012, <http://ourrabbijesus.com/covered-in-the-dust-of-your-rabbi-an-urban-legend/> (accessed October 30, 2016). Tverberg is the author of *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012).

to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:18-20). In John 21:25, John acknowledges the depth of Jesus’ discipleship and says, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

The initial stages of VOI discipleship are fundamental practices in the homes of biological families and in recovery homes. Like Jesus, directors and spiritual fathers model spiritual disciplines every day before their disciples. In recovery homes, this happens daily for the duration of the program, which is nine months to one year. Disciples and new Christians together learn how to pray, fast, read, and meditate on God’s Word; they collectively witness in the streets. These are the basic principles that are intentionally and deliberately deposited into the lives of brothers and sisters in the home. While it embraces the learn-act-adjust method of Jesus, it also reflects the Timothy principle in its process.

The Timothy principle is a mode of multiplication and involves mentors specifically teaching what they have seen and heard to their disciples and disciples finding faithful men, so they can find others and do the same thing. This is a lifestyle of initial learning and reproduction that begins to grow within their spirit. This was Paul’s method of discipleship in 2 Timothy 2:2 and Philippians 4:9, as discussed earlier. This is done by intentionally cultivating close relationships with brothers and sisters who are new to the faith. Paul compares this process to nursing a child and giving birth by traveling until Christ is formed in them (1 Thessalonians 2:7; Galatians 4:19). This

involves transmitting, taking the time to invest in them by depositing the Word of God, praying together, and meditating on what God is doing in the life of the individual.

Discipleship is a powerful process.

The external purpose of Christian family is to carry on the mission that God has given His people to accomplish. Through discipleship, a family transmits and deposits its values, doctrine, vision, and philosophy of ministry to the next generation. This all happens through communication, which is another vital family value involved in ministering to one another. Biblical communication is the transmission of truth, applicable by speaking an understandable language that both parties can grasp, remember, comprehend, apply, and synergize. Communication needs to be embraced, so disciples can learn to understand one another in all circumstances and situations. Many times in ministry, due to a lack of communication, people are hurt and offended and this hurts the entire Body of Christ, because all members belong to Jesus: “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many” (1 Corinthians 12:14). Most often, it is due to immaturity and inexperience or one’s basic fallen nature that things get distorted or miscommunicated. Part of maturing in the faith means learning how to talk to others with love. For this reason, Paul writes: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29 NKJV).

Honest and intimate communication helps to bond Christians together in unity, which forms the cohesiveness of being family. This means being able to talk out differences and acknowledging failures along with successes. This is how to manage the

storms of ministry in harmony. As another family value, focusing on unity helps one to see the whole picture, instead of living simply through personal ambition and goals. Unity in diversity is the mindset that needs to happen to be a missional church in the community, where God is already present doing ministry and preparing His people.

As the household of God, this leads to another family value: respecting one another. Jesus defines respect in Matthew 7:12, saying, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” This transmits into the lives of the Christian also and must be a strong value among all generations in a family. This is key and goes along with the previous values of family, discipleship, and communication. If the value of mutual love and respect is not functioning, there will be challenges in practicing the other values of communication, family, and discipleship. In today’s world, people often want respect but do not want to give respect. The concept of respect bridges into a very strong cultural value among the gangs and Hispanics in general. Here respect is earned. When people lose respect for someone, that individual also loses influence. This is why it is so important to guard the deposit of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:14). Jesus tells His people to be the initiators of respect and says it all comes down to the golden rule: Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31). Another Scripture that encourages respect and helps to strip one of all pride, ego, and self is turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29), even if someone physically hits. Jesus teaches the concept of respect, because He understands it is something everyone wants. Respect is a form of love, which is the opposite of selfishness and being boastful or prideful (1 Corinthians 13:4-13).

Another family value is the presence of strong parental roles in the community and church. God started in the garden with one family. Genesis 1:27-28 explains, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Through fruitfulness and multiplication, a family evolves into a community and eventually populates the earth.

The Christian parental model initially starts at home or within a church context, as mentioned in the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:1-7:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. . . . You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

It is the responsibility of parents, biological and spiritual, to raise and train children and new believers in the ways of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). For Christian parents, taking care of one’s biological family is a precursor to leadership and care of God’s house. For this reason, Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 that a church leader “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”

This leads to another important value of the household of God: serving one another and together as a family and church to meet the needs of the broader community. Here community is defined as wherever the Lord would have His people harvest in His world. This is the beautiful vision and mission that God has given to the Body of Christ.

As God has restored people's lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, in that someone told them about the good news of Jesus and the greatness of God, Christ-followers can participate in the transformation of the lives of others, if only they just trust Him. Serving one another and together outwardly is a way of co-laboring with Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:10).

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Christians co-labor with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, who can be all over the world, whereas Jesus was on earth and was limited in His body, because he only could be in one place at a time. This is what Paul meant when he wrote: "The Holy Spirit lives within us" (2 Timothy 1:14). Serving one another as a family happens by respecting one another, communicating with one another, and teaching and learning from one another—in other words, discipleship. Through discipleship and serving together, believers intentionally and deliberately invest and deposit the rich and priceless gospel that has been entrusted to them and take it to the next generation.

### **Transitions of Generations: Moses to Joshua**

Throughout every generation, God has given human beings the universal truth of His Word to be passed on to every generation. Psalm 145:13 explains that God's "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and . . . his dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works." By His sovereignty and providence, He chooses flawed and redeemed human beings to lead His people. This truth is everlasting and is able to deliver people from the bondage of the



world (John 8:32), the flesh and supernatural evil unseen powers (Ephesians 6:12). This truth was operating in the deliverance of the children of Israel from the power and authority of Pharaoh in Egypt (Exodus 7:22). God used Moses to lead His people free (Exodus 6:6). He also used Joshua to bring His people into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:3). The God of history chooses individuals to reveal Himself to the world and, at strategic times, He has raised up whole generations to fulfill His purpose.

In the Old Testament, God called a man to use and during his training brought someone close to him, so he could transmit the continuity of the vision before he passed away. In looking at Moses' birth, calling, responsibility, and experiences that he learned while in Egypt and in the desert, it is easy to see how God etched out a man who totally had to depend upon Him. Just the way that his name was given reflects this, as "Moses" translates as "pulled out of the water" (Exodus 2:10). By the time of the plagues, which God brought on Egypt (Exodus 5:3; 9:14-29), Moses had established beyond any doubt, both before Egypt and before Israel, that he was God's man for the tremendous task of leading the Israelites. Exodus 11:3 asserts, "Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." After the Israelites had been delivered from the Egyptians, Exodus 14:31 records: "Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." Only as Moses' leadership was fully established with Israel was he able to proceed in leading them out of Egypt, through the desert, and to the land of his forefathers.

Moses trained Joshua to bring the next generation into the land that God had promised their ancestors (Joshua 11:15, 23). Now in this transition of responsibility from Moses to Joshua, there needed to be deliberate and intentional discipleship factors in the life of Moses to transmit into Joshua. This involved seeking the Lord together through prayer (Deuteronomy 31:14) and ministering together. This was the discipleship factor. Essentially, Moses adopted a system or method of transmitting his values and beliefs to his apprentice, disciple, and trainee. This included transferring his own spirit to Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9), which he does also when designating seventy subleaders to serve as judges to the Israelites (Numbers 11:16-17), when he accepts the corrective wisdom of his father-in-law, Jethro (Exodus 18:1-26).

Relationship was important in the leadership transition between Moses, who represented the older generation, and Joshua, who represented the younger generation. Moses related with Joshua as apprentice, disciple, and soldier (Joshua 17:9). Joshua was Moses' soldier and someone on whom he could rely to be his successor. In a similar vein, even Jesus recognized there could be no success without a successor. For this reason, He gathered the twelve (Mark 3:14; Mathew. 10:1-5; Luke 6:13) and intentionally infused His values, teaching, vision, and Spirit into their lives. In John 20:21, He said, "As the Father sent Me, so I send you." So the critical importance of leadership succession continues in VOI today.

An important thing that Moses modeled was how to delegate his leadership.

Exodus 11:16-17 shows how God instructed Moses:

Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring to the tent of meeting, and let them

take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

This had a great impact on the birth of the nation of Israel. This was the model for Joshua, as he became ready to carry on the responsibility of a second-generation leader succeeding the founder. Passing on leadership is fundamentally a matter of discipleship and succession planning, which is a critical facet of VOI's spiritual formation as a new denomination.

Passing on the mantle of leadership happens through intentional discipleship. Paul says it is important to learn to "lead with all diligence" (Romans 12:8). Therefore, intentional discipleship is not simply a matter of achieving God's best future for those one leads. It is about obediently following Christ, as shown earlier in the Timothy principle.

Just as the Israelites needed to be reminded of their beginning as a nation, those who know Jesus Christ as Savior need to be reminded of the deliverance they have experienced also. Israel's redemption from Egypt constituted the first step in the life of the nation, as people stepped into freedom. Before that time, they were merely a group of slaves. God redeemed them by blood and by His power (Exodus 29:20; 30:10). The animal's blood and sacrifices atoned for the people of Israel annually, and now how much more the blood of the lamb that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

It is amazing to observe the discipleship of Israel through Moses' leadership. It happened in a three-stage journey, as outlined in Scripture. The first stage is seen in Exodus 6:6, in which God says to Moses, "Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you

from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.” Here the first stage is being selected to be freed from bondage. For many years they were under the yoke of bondage, the heavy hand of Pharaoh, because of disobeying the Law of God. But in the midst of their troubles and afflictions, they cried out to God, and He heard their cries (Exodus 39).

The second stage is confronting Pharaoh to let his people go. Going as directed by God to address Pharaoh, Moses was reluctant because even his people did not believe him. This is shown in Exodus 6:7-11, where God through Moses says, “I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” Here Moses as leader serves as messenger between God and the people and Pharaoh. There is mutual trust and investment. This truth is relevant today. Maybe the scars from the past haunted him (Exodus 7:2), but reacting and believing in the God of creation impacted not only Moses’ own life but all whom he disciplined and led.

The third stage is being released to possess the land. God is always faithful to His promises, and in the story of Moses’ leadership and its transmission to Joshua God declares it loudly and clearly. Possessing land that was promised but in the present belonged to someone else required a boldness and confidence. This is shown in Exodus 6:8, where God through Moses says, “And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord,” and also in Numbers 13, where the newer generation argued as to whether or not it was possible. Only Joshua and Caleb spoke with faith instead of pessimism (Numbers 14:6-9).

This Old Testament accounts shows that in leadership development, there are always tests and trials before the possession of God's promises come into full manifestation.

These three stages in Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan also illustrate three stages in individual believers' lives today. In the New Testament, Paul offers insight into this Old Testament revelation, he writes "These things happened to them as example and were written down as warnings for us, on who the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Egypt is symbolic of believers' being occupied with the things of the world. Israel in the desert is symbolic of the believers' being occupied with the self and this present life. In their era, Israel grumbled and complained against Moses and against God, even though God was performing miracles to take care of them. In addition, Israel in Canaan symbolized the believer's being occupied with the things of God or the God-life. So it is with the stages of Christ-followers today in their spiritual life. As leaders transmit the mantle to their disciples, it is important to gauge their perspective with these questions: Are they concerned about the world? Are they all into themselves or submitting to God?

This is where VOI needs to evaluate and analyze the various generations that are in its congregations. We see "Pastor Sonny" as our Moses, sharing with us the promises that God has given every believer. This is particularly true for those who are ex-gangsters and former drug addicts. Christ has set us free from our "Egypt." We continually are dealing with the self and seek to believe God to transform us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the goal for every child of God, who comes through VOI's doors.

God has used Arguinzoni to give a hopeless people, who were in bondage like the Israelites, a vision of deliverance. Throughout the decades in VOI's ministry, he had to

move back and forth the zoom lens to focus on the potential leadership that was going to take this ministry into the future. If a key leadership position was unexpectedly vacated due to death, disability, or disqualification, there was a search for a “Joshua” or another “elder” who was ready to assume that position and responsibility. Now that this generation is in their sixties and seventies, VOI leaders ask, “Do they have the capacity of their predecessor?” These probing questions linger among VOI elders. Just as Moses spent much time with Joshua, and Jesus spent much time with the Twelve, Arguinzoni purposely and intentionally is spending a majority of his time with members of the younger generation, in order to pass on a strong theological framework to VOI churches. However, like Jesus in an earthly body, he is but one man. For this reason, a theologically grounded ministry strategy of intentional discipleship is needed to help current leaders raise up new leaders who embrace the Victory Outreach DNA.

### **Theological Transgenerational Transitions**

Along with a sound theological foundation, adaptable leadership is required in order to raise up the younger generation with power and might. The transition happens as a common history, stories, and experience with God are passed on. This transpired from Moses to Joshua and is the same thing that needs to happen in VOI’s transference of leadership.

In order to declare VOI’s missional mandate through pastoral theology, it will have to be deliberate and intentional. This involves what we are actually transmitting through communication. Such communication takes the form of preaching, teaching, modeling, and transparent lifestyle in front of these upcoming generations. This also

happens through formal academic settings, such as VETI, and diverse non-formal communication that occurs in ministry through one-on-one relationships and accountability groups.

Engaging in theological transgenerational transitions has led to re-evaluating VOI stories through Appreciative Inquiry and assessing the needs of the community, specifically in Victory Outreach Riverside where this ministry project is being piloted. This is done through discipleship groups throughout the community to create an ambience for spiritual formation. It is viewed as a theological missional mandate for God's people and future generation. These great endeavors will be discussed in Part Three.

PART THREE  
MINISTRY STRATEGY



## CHAPTER 6

### BRINGING THE BEST FROM THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

This chapter begins to address how to meet the need for community and church discipleship groups as the primary channel for spiritual transformation. The ministry of Victory Outreach International is rooted in the aforementioned biblical teaching of community wholeness.<sup>1</sup> Bringing that awareness and understanding helps to create a process that fosters transformation within the church. This chapter also presents a plan for identifying and supervising leaders, who can reflect on a profile for church members invited to participate in the ministry. It establishes the process for leaders and groups either to form around or discern together a common missional focus that is biblical in light of VOI principles, values, philosophy, and doctrinal beliefs being transmitted to future generations.

#### **Appreciative Inquiry Studies**

Bringing the best from the past involves the process of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is remembering the most exciting times that have brought joy and excitement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Part Two of this discussion for details.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 7.

This involves questions that make participants ponder the past in order to think about the people and actions that made things happen. There was leadership involved that helped make these memories alive in their minds. This new approach of bringing change to the church through Appreciative Inquiry happens by solving problems in the church through a positive perspective. The goal of AI is “to change the conversation—to stimulate the thinking and imagination of the congregation—through a process that focuses upon the honorable, the pure, the pleasing, and the commendable.”<sup>3</sup>

For this ministry strategy, which took place at Victory Outreach Riverside, AI was the tool to evaluate the condition of the congregation and encourage communication. The leadership started this process back in the spring of 2007. At this time, there were six groups of people with three to five people within each group representing their generation. The groups were diverse in age, social status, cultural background, and ethnicity. They were given three questions in a private interview, and then they took the same questions to their groups for discussion.

Here are the questions that each leader of the group answered and pondered:

- 1) Remembering your entire experience at your church, when were you most alive, most motivated and excited about your involvement? What made it exciting? Who else was involved? What happened? What was your part? Describe what you felt.
- 2) What did the church value most? What activities or ingredients or ways of life were most important? What were the best features of the church?
- 3) Make three wishes for the future of the church.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of these questions was to choose the positive as the focus of inquiry and seek narratives involving life-giving forces. Then participants located the themes that appeared

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 137.

in the stories and selected topics for further inquiry. They drew preferred images from the inquiries in order to see ways that have assisted the church to bring transformation, which might prove useful for the future.

The strongest component and dynamic that seemed to resonate among the interviewees was the discipleship factor and the sense of family and destiny. The leaders selected criteria to intentionally awaken the gifts and hunger for maturity along with respect, which is essential in relating to the intergenerational challenges in a postmodern world of discontinuity. What this means is that change is inevitable, as opposed to what it used to be: a culture that was predictable with programs and plans for the future. Now, there has to be adaptability and flexibility as members of Victory Outreach Riverside co-labor together building God's kingdom. Along with the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the value of family has been the bonding adhesive that has kept the congregation together. These are the values that the church needs to transfer and deposit into the next generation, along with their own personal experiences.

#### Interviewing the Older and Younger Generations

The Appreciative Inquiry approach was very insightful and beneficial for the congregation. It began the process of shepherding God's people in fulfilling the purposes, within themselves and in the community. Interviewing the older and younger generations brought insights into the life story of the church. The enthusiasm and life from past experiences into the present brought a fresh and new presence. Essentially, it created an awareness that God always has been creating opportunities to be innovative and creative in His Church.

Interviews were performed with six leaders of the church who voluntarily gave their personal narratives using the AI approach. Their stories varied from generation to generation, coming from different experiences. Interviewees ranged in age from twenty-two to sixty-five years old and emerged into the church during different decades and under different leadership. There were three women: ages sixty-five, forty-five, and twenty-two. They were joined by three men: ages sixty-three, forty-four, and twenty-seven. Each of the groups had one or two teenagers who were anywhere between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. The information gathered through these interviewees has drawn out recollections, yearnings and expectations, and narratives spanning Victory Outreach Riverside's nearly forty-year history.

The participants were asked to share what, when, and with whom were their most joyous memories of the past that they could recall that brought life, joy, excitement, and passion. Another question asked that if they had three wishes, where they would want the church to be in the future. The three wishes of the interviewees for the future of the church collectively were the following: first to love God with all their heart, mind, and soul; second, returning to the streets in creative and innovative ways of doing evangelistic outreach in the community; third, strong relationships through fellowship, being faithful and loyal to one another and the ministry.

In reminiscing, there were some hurts that sprang alongside the joys and sometimes feelings of dismay and abandonment surfaced with the hope in these conversations. The major thoughts the AI interviewees brought to the surface were that the church was once evangelizing the streets as a family, with parents and children passing out literature to the

people in the communities. The variety of ways the congregation would do outreach was adventurous and exciting. Along with the warm and friendly fellowship with one another, there was a discipleship factor that brought a sense of destiny and hope for the future.

Another dynamic that participants felt was the love and unity to reach the community and fellowship with neighboring Victory Outreach churches. This brought a cohesiveness and family value in the midst of the people. There is strength in unity, and that needs to be built back into the congregation to breed an ambience of vision, passion, and unity. Without vision, the Bible says that people will “perish or cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18). These narratives are important because they produce the realization of how it was and how much it could be again, if there is harmony. The values of family, vision, evangelism, prayer, and fellowship are what brought joy and kept Victory Outreach Riverside together, which transpired much as it did in the early Church (Acts 2:42-47).

#### Assessing the Needs of the Church

The assessment of the church’s needs resulted from the AI conversations with interviewees and observations conducted in 2007. There has always been a need for strong and competent leadership in the church. This surfaced as a primary congregational concern.

Evaluating the narratives of the AI data and being personally involved in the beginning of the church gave more insight, meaning, and understanding to the history of the congregation. Interviewees were seeing this and desiring change, but they experienced some degree of uncertainty due to the church’s many leadership turnovers. This has bred a spirit of apathy and lethargy that needed to be dealt with and removed.

In assessing the church's needs based on the interviews of the six groups, the AI brought to the surface that the church was once the third most giving church in VOI. Furthermore, it was the first church to send missionaries across the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean to Hawaii and Amsterdam. It was also one of the first Victory Outreach congregations to purchase its own building in 1986. Drawing from the greatest times of the past, this church has the spiritual elements of greatness in maintaining vision and generosity, with resilient lay leadership in its DNA. Although the church had lost sight of its original vision, passion, and momentum due to the repercussions of high turnover of pastoral leadership throughout the years, the AI process has served to open a door into the future.

#### Bringing the Spirit of the Best from the Past into Future Generations

Identifying the experiences and sensations of the past brought joy and opportunities for hope to interviewees. These memories of the past awakened possibilities that seemed to motivate them to create the environment that formed those memorable, dynamic times. Capturing that spirit of past success was the first step in bringing back the vision, passion, and compassion that have been dormant throughout the years.

During the interviews, the participants began to compare the past and present. A felt need surfaced: returning to their first love and leadership development that is stable and consistent. The AI analysis brought up possible solutions in the mind's eye of "what might be" by interpreting the interviews, taking the risk of imagination, and dreaming about building towards harmony concerning "what should be."<sup>5</sup> In focusing on the positive and the best of inquiry, interviewees began to create images of the future of the church, which

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 138.

brought excitement and joy. This interview process focused on powerful and life-giving stories that brought great memories, instead of focusing on past problems.

### **The Mission Action Team: Its Formation and Journey into Awareness**

In 2007 a Missional Action Team (MAT) was formed by choosing a group of eight leaders in the church, who have proven themselves in ministry and who had experience doing it for three years or more. Some of these leaders were part of the pastoral staff, and six of them were licensed ministers, including me. Since the formation of the team, some have left to shepherd other churches or moved out of state due to their vocation, and one is deceased. The church has maintained a solid number of eight on the MAT since then. The group meets every week in working through two resources by Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Mission-Shaped Churches Workbook*<sup>6</sup> and *Pastor Readiness Workbook*.<sup>7</sup>

The church went through a systematic process in identifying key missional challenges. Facilitating the MAT and initiating this project in 2007 has provided an avenue to intentionally transmit VOI values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry into the younger generation. The MAT is still comprised of eight people who are actively involved in ministry in the church. The main prerequisite for being on the MAT is for a person to have a deep and genuine commitment to the church's vision and its people.

Mapping progress has been a challenge, due the constant changes occurring with MAT members. Nevertheless, there always is a remnant of the MAT that rises up into

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<sup>6</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *Mission-Shaped Churches Workbook* (Vancouver, BC: Missional Leadership Institute, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *Pastor Readiness Workbook* (Vancouver, BC: Missional Leadership Institute, n.d.).

new leadership and carries on the process of engaging in missional discernment. As a church involved in this missional process, there has surfaced the need for a guiding team to plan and promote the work, other than the MAT. This guiding team was formed one year after the initial MAT was formed, in light of the importance of re-evaluating the missional process and experiments with the church, and was comprised of lay leaders of church departments and pastoral leaders. This has been a journey in uncharted waters for all Victory Outreach Riverside ministers but well worth the effort.

The Missional Action Team has actively engaged in a journey of awareness. They learned to look at the essentials of leadership and to see what missional change is about. The AI data brought insight and awareness to the MAT, which needed to be addressed before entering the next missional stages. They learned that vision and missional life were essential and required full transformation of the main congregants of the church. The MAT determined that the most important adaptive challenge to address was the link between discipleship and leadership development that involved mobilizing the entire church for ministry and not just those with gifts of pastoring, church planting, and evangelism.

This resulted in the formation of the first goal: to encourage 10 percent of the congregation to journey with them through the first four stages of missional change.<sup>8</sup> Seeking to meet this goal transformed the Missional Action Team members, and they became ready to enter stage five and commit themselves to a new way of working as God's people. The MAT and guiding team were fully engaged in the process, assessing and analyzing in order to implement change. It was important that they had relational

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<sup>8</sup> This will be discussed in more detail later in this same section.



skills because they constantly were confronting and challenging people, mobilizing them and bringing change to resisters and non-adapters.<sup>9</sup> This was done by what Victory Outreach Riverside calls a “huddle.” A member of the guiding team would gather a ministry-focused group—such as ushers, the worship team, or children’s ministry workers—and ask where people were individually and as a group with respect to each of the five E’s and three C’s. This enabled congregants to speak freely about how they were internalizing the mission, vision, and values of VOI on a personal level and how this affected specific hands-on ministry and leadership in that ministry.

The guiding team became aware of opportunities and barriers they needed to face, so they could effectively bridge the differences among congregants. These barriers included their own irrelevance and pettiness that they felt about themselves. They were also in the growing process that God was doing throughout the church. The guiding team met once a month, in the stages of each process. They were the ones who encouraged the congregation through the missional process, with the MAT coaching them.

The church began the missional process in 2008 and has been cycling through the steps over and over as congregants have become more missionally minded. The MAT initially used the *Pastoral Readiness Workbook*<sup>10</sup> more instead of the *Mission-Shaped Churches Workbook*, because the specific strategy at Victory Outreach Riverside sought to raise up leaders to shepherd the congregation. The guiding team did not use a book, because their role was more relational and focused on helping people internalize the

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<sup>9</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Pastor Readiness Workbook*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

mission, vision, and values of VOI—specifically, the five E’s and three C’s. The change needed to be more than leader-dependent or based on a few key people. Missional church development within the VOI context needed to be a bottom-up process to foster an environment in which the people themselves could discover the ways the Spirit was calling them into mission and ministry across the street and around the world. Those involved in the MAT and guiding team came to understand that missional change not only must engage this new kind of world with new skills and capacities but also involves creating environments in which lasting missional change can be encouraged throughout a church.

Victory Outreach Riverside went through five stages. The “Awareness” stage involved recognizing the need to reframe, retool, and refocus how leaders were involved in mission.<sup>11</sup> This first stage gave ways of explaining what we were feeling. Through awareness, the MAT came to realize that feelings, tensions, or anxieties are insufficient basis to initiate strategic plans to change the church. Essentially, people need time to live into their feelings and tensions long enough to give words and meaning to what is happening. This breeds the necessary communication to begin to enact change that innovates transformation. Leaders must begin with where their people are, not where leaders want them to be or where they ought to in terms of some program or plan.

The next stage that the MAT experienced was “Understanding.”<sup>12</sup> This is where cultivating missional change occurs, in which individual awareness turns into a period of

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<sup>11</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Mission-Shaped Churches Workbook*, 15-16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

dialogue among people. People begin to converse, and walls begin to come down. This is when people are invited, not into solutions and answers but into a process of going deeper and discerning the issues. This involved the MAT explaining the meaning of what they were learning through their interactive engagement with one another. They learned that understanding develops from awareness, and this comes from people having a chance to dialogue with one another in order to frame with one another meaningful explanations of all the change they are experiencing. In this process, people begin to ask one another new kinds of questions that stimulate new forms of thinking. People's mindset had to change into a missional mindset.

This led to the third stage in the effective change process: "Evaluation."<sup>13</sup> In this stage, people are invited to bring their new understanding into conversation with current practices, values, philosophy of ministry, and overall congregational life. This offers assurance that people are speaking the same language and that they truly understand the current life and actions of the church. Here the MAT began to consider what kind of support they need in terms of skill, structures, and resources to move forward with the vision of the church. This is a phase of decision making as the church moves either toward or away from the actual actions that will effect change.

The fourth stage was "Experimentation."<sup>14</sup> Here the MAT identified aspects of the adaptive challenge it wanted to address in the coming months. These became experiments in learning new ways of doing mission. Only at this point is lasting change embedded in the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

church's life. For Victory Outreach Riverside, this meant experimenting ways of doing discipleship that could offer a concrete path for new leaders to emerge in all areas of church ministry. The main challenge the MAT identified was finding faithful men and women to be and stay consistent, because without those basic elements we cannot raise up new leadership.

The last and final stage is "Commitment."<sup>15</sup> The MAT learned that this is when congregants have internalized the frameworks of change; they are actively innovating the changes at all levels of the church's life and getting others involved. Essentially, people own the congregational vision as something tangible, measurable, and observable and see passion and action occurring. Roxburgh and Romanuk state, "Until a congregation reaches this stage, no lasting change occurs. Too often leaders want to begin at this stage, which is why most either fail or do not outlive the leaders who introduced them."<sup>16</sup>

As a result of the surveys and going through the five stages and embracing missional thinking, this experience with the MAT has changed me as a senior pastor in three ways. It has led me away from maintaining the status quo to becoming a developer, equipper, mentor, and mentor of mentors. As a result, I started using Moses' Jethro principle to select leaders, invest in them, and gradually empower them with authority and responsibility.

The first change was focusing on delegating and empowering people who were poised for greater responsibility, instead of micromanaging ministry. The change I learned here was to release ministry into the hands of upcoming potential leaders. This

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

has meant trusting God, leaving them room for mistakes, and understanding such events as a learning process.

The second change involved shifting my focus from broad congregational care to mentoring new leaders one on one. This mentoring has taken shape by equipping, training, and developing leaders for the work of hands-on ministry. As I began to focus on just that and seeking to mentor leaders who could lead and disciple others, the burden of being senior pastor seemed to lessen, ministry began to flourish, and congregants have started to discover their unique gifts and find their place in ministry. Focusing on training for the needs of the ministries, God began to bring the right people around me to help build His kingdom through Victory Outreach Riverside.

The third change occurred in my philosophy of leadership and accountability. I began to use Moses' Jethro principle of raising up men of capacity to lead. In Exodus 18:19-23, Moses' father-in-law gave him some great advice, which helped him delegate the work to faithful and reputable men of different capacities. The MAT process made me realize I was in a similar situation and had to begin to delegate in order to minister to more people and reproduce disciples who could do the same with others.

The Pastor Readiness Survey gave the MAT, and especially me as the senior pastor, feedback on how we were functioning currently concerning our capabilities. This included a clear analysis of my skill level as a senior pastor in leading the congregation through the processes of change, cultivating a missional environment, and shaping the congregation's life to be Christlike. The study addresses four areas of life and ministry, in

order to be effective in missional leadership.<sup>17</sup> It deals with the personal attributes that ministers/pastors need to have in order to help people cultivate a way of life, which translates into shaping a missional congregation that can engage in bringing transformation to the community. The self-readiness factor means personal maturity and how they resolve conflicts, and sets them ready to engage and that develops courage and trust in the individual. Some factors are obvious when people are ready; they invite change and create a coalition that cultivates growth and missional thinking.

Congregational factors began to appear, like integration among the generations that cultivates missional culture and practices that create a missional theology. When this began to happen, the church started understanding its surroundings. Congregants are truly engaged when they seek to develop a missional future for the church and community.

The MAT began to cultivate this environment and implement the mentioned factors, which started forming a people shaped by missional practices and biblical narratives, along with the AI experiences. The team discovered that through the repercussions, disruptions, and discontinuous change, leaders needed to be able to lead the church through the process of conflict and change. Some things only can be learned through experience. God does the work in the lives of leaders first, so that He can work through them.

Missional change comes from a clear understanding that sees what God already is doing with the people. It is not a leader's intellect or slick programs that bring God into the scene. God is already here doing something that leaders need to know in order to cooperate

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<sup>17</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Pastor Readiness Workbook*, 21.

with Him and help His people see Him work within them. Therefore, they can be an asset to the community in return.

### **Strategy and Goals for Intentional Discipleship through LIFE Cell Groups**

As a result of the missional process, the church's small groups were repurposed as "LIFE Cell Groups" (LCGs) in 2008. LIFE is an acronym that stands for "Life, Instruction, Fellowship, and Evangelism." They are now the small groups of the local church, designed to intentionally make disciples by reproducing themselves and guiding new converts through the process of growth and maturity, so they in turn will find faithful men and women to do the same. It is the vehicle of intentional discipleship and the thesis of this project through which to transmit VOI's values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy of ministry to the next generation in order to enable transgenerational progression of a common vision within a changing reality.

The LIFE groups bring an ambience of life. Participants make a bonding covenant together in commitment to one another, the church, and its community. Although group members do not sign their commitment on paper, their lives sign together in love and harmony in partnering with God in new innovative ways of doing ministry as a team. These groups make sure that spiritual formation is happening through spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and devotion in God's Word. Everyone serves and helps one another in love. Transformation and missional innovation flow through the LIFE Groups.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> How the groups found their missional focus is discussed in Chapter 7.

At Victory Outreach Riverside, there are four types of LCGs: Learning, Serving, Reaching Out, and Loving (support). While each group generally emphasizes learning, serving, reaching out, and loving as core values, congregants gather to accomplish a distinct goal, which is one of the four, while still doing the other three but not to the focused degree of the group's primary goal. Each group, regardless of focus, consists of ten to fifteen people from the church or the community. As part of this strategy, those who lead the LCGs now select the Bible passages that most speak to their particular group's theme and center biblical study around their respective topics, instead of simply reviewing the pastor's Sunday sermon content.

The overall objective of the Learning LCG is to learn the Bible. Group members gather every week for the sole purpose to study the Bible together. They also fellowship, serve and love one another, and challenge individuals to grow and mature together. This means being assimilated into congregational life and continuing in other training and equipping according to a person's unique gifts. As part of the ministry strategy, the leader of each group seeks an apprentice to disciple, so that he or she can reproduce another LCG in the community.

The overall goal of the Serving LCG is for participants to serve the church and find their purpose in discovering their gifts and skills, so that they can be an asset to the church and community. Members in a Serving LCG seek to aid one another and assist in a ministry in the church. Many fellowship activities are planned in this group, as relationships begin to blossom. These LCGs also have apprentices for the purposes of reproduction.



The overall goal of the Reaching Out LCG is to evangelize the community and gather people within the church who are not actively involved in any type of LCG or ministry. This group inclines more toward witnessing and finding new and innovative ways in reaching their surrounding community. Their goal is reaching out in the name of the loving Christ throughout the neighborhoods, with hopes of bringing peace and unity to the community. Apprentices are present here as well.

The fourth group is the Loving LCG. Its main goal is to support people in the community. These group members make a special effort to walk with people during the challenging situations in their life. The goal is to be there with support when a family member passes away, if someone experiences a divorce, or with family members who may be incarcerated. The group prays for them and supports them with Scripture and friendship. The focused objective of this cell group is offering love and support, as people engage in recovery from grief or loss. Leaders of these LCGs also walk with apprentices.

LCGs meet every week for two hours. The general format is the same. Participants greet and welcome one another, introduce newcomers, and offer them care and a sense of belonging. Then they worship the Lord, study the Word of God, and share lives and fellowship with some great hospitality. Finally, they pray for one another before departing.

There are general guiding parameters for LIFE Cell Groups. They go through a cyclical process of meeting for sixteen weeks and then break for two weeks for retooling, refocusing, and re-visioning, which is training of the groups. The MAT, along with the guiding team, gathers the facilitators of these LCGs along with their group's apprentice (disciple). Together they evaluate and analyze the groups. Like the guiding team, the

LCG leaders also use the “huddle” approach to check in periodically with their groups with respect to how they are living out the five E’s and three C’s in their personal lives as disciples. During this informal chat, congregants speak freely about how they are living out the mission, vision, and values of VOI or where they might be struggling.

The health and growth of the cell groups are gauged by the five E’s (Exaltation, Envisioning, Evangelism, Equipping, and Establishing).<sup>19</sup> Each group engages in study of God’s Word and worship and meaningful practices of spiritual disciplines, explores possibilities for their collective future based on shared passion, does outreach, and supports the training of present leaders and apprentices as a means of developing the laity for the work of the ministry. Retooling and reframing every couple of months gives the MAT, guiding team, and LCG leaders and apprentices a way of assessing what group members need and making sure the discipleship factor remains balanced over the long term.

The three C’s (Cause, Community, and Corporate) help to bring an overall balance to the groups and the ministries of the church and also link with the LCGs. Group leaders and their apprentices are responsible for keeping the VOI vision and mission at the forefront of their group, reminding them that they are ambassadors for Christ (Ephesians 6:10-20). Group gatherings allow time for family bonding and *koinonia* and encourage collaboration in the ministry of God. These three C’s function collectively to maintain steadiness and equilibrium through an LCG’s missional experimentation and as new believers and leaders are raised up within the church.

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 2 for further details on the five E’s.

## **Target Population and Leaders**

For the purposes of this project, the target population for LCGs is the younger generation. Although the ministry focus is the younger generation, older generations are just as important. It is in the landmark of VOI forefathers that the church draws its plumb line to continue doing and being what God has called it to do and be throughout all generations. Anyone who has leadership ability—regardless of whether they are from the Builder, Boomer, X or Y Generations—forms the target population for participation in LCGs and can qualify for selection as potential leaders.

Leadership selection is not a once-and-for-all thing that is done early in people's lives, when they decide that God wants them in full-time ministry. Rather, leadership selection is a lifetime process in which God continues to select leaders for leadership responsibility at higher levels until they are operating "according to the measure of their faith" (Romans 12:3).

The strategy in processing a convert to disciple, disciple to worker, worker to leader, and leader to leader of leaders is done through a process called "SIR." SIR stands for "Select," "Invest," and "Release."<sup>20</sup> While one-on-one mentoring and releasing into ministry is how VOI traditionally has engaged in leader multiplication, SIR is a reproducible process I formulated from a missional perspective as part of this strategy. It works in tandem with the Discipleship Chart and breaks down the process into three key benchmarks that can be used with any type of leader—whether that person is an usher

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix A for the SIR Chart and Appendix B for the Discipleship Chart.

selecting and investing and releasing more ushers into the congregation, a worship leader mentoring another musician, or an LCG leader working with an apprentice.

Selecting potential leaders involves looking at the whole life of the potential leader, even pre-Christian involvement and influences, such as gang leadership, holding a school office position, or functioning occupationally as a supervisor or foreman in the secular realm. These traits and influences can carry over into Christian life and often are part of how God already has been shaping believers for His purpose and glory. Selection requires insight based on a strong view of God's sovereignty. Leaders are not created or shaped in an instant. There is a continual shaping process, which lasts over the course of a lifetime.

Selection also involves observation and prayer as the two essential skills in choosing potential disciples, as some will become ministry team leaders, church leaders, or leaders of leaders. Those involved in the selection process look for a disciple's desire for basic spiritual practices, such as a hunger for God's Word, praying, and having a devotional life that bears fruit. The MAT and guiding team began to observe the men and women coming through their trainings and saw how they could serve within the equipping and developing systems of Victory Outreach Riverside. Since acronyms are easy to remember, they refer to the selection and look for "FAT" candidates. These are disciples who are faithful, available, and teachable. FAT potentials have a good reputation within the church and in the community. Being obedient and loyal, they have proven themselves reliable in fulfilling small tasks. The teaching and training systems that they start with are the Foundations of Faith I, II and III, which occur throughout the year during the fall, winter, and spring. It is the training avenue for initial investment into future leaders and

ensures that they receive grounded instruction in the five E's, three C's, and fundamentals of Christian faith and membership in the Body of Christ.

As the second aspect of SIR, Investment involves depositing resources into a leader. Quality time is spent in informal training that builds relationship and requires commitment and accountability. This entails shepherding, caring, and giving attention in times of need and walking with them through personal challenges such as fear, doubt, and lack of faith. This aspect also may require financial support by investing in future leaders through sponsorship in academia, books, and training materials. There are three major goals in Investment: complete submission to the Lordship of Christ, deep spiritual formation in which the disciple seeks to be like Christ, and reproduction in which the leader becomes a disciple-maker. These training evenings also are open to any disciple of any age who wishes to grow spiritually.

Investment helps develop the basic character and qualities of the disciple. This is done through testing. It is here where the disciple's potential to become a leader is most observable. When the disciple responds successfully to the test, this results in inner growth and expansion of ministry, usefulness for God. The testing and expansion process involves three phases: The first one is the test, the second is how disciples respond to the test (which is key), and the third is the outworking of the test (the result).<sup>21</sup> A positive response usually involves expanded usefulness for God, though its effects may be delayed. A negative response to the test usually results in a cycling around to pass through a similar test again, with the opportunity for a more positive response. This begins to really show

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 508.

where disciples are spiritually. It requires either a repeated test or perhaps exhortation, correction, or discipline—although these may be delayed, depending on each situation. The mentor of disciples walks with them and continually invests in them during this stage.

There are four major process items that are common types of testing. The Integrity test evaluates the disciple's heart (emotional intention) and willingness to follow through on the heart's intent. The Obedience test examines the disciple's personal response to revealed truth. The Word test assesses the disciple's ability to understand or receive a word from God and then allow God to work it out in the ups and downs of life. The Ministry test is an assignment from God and tests the disciple's faithfulness and obedience, which begins to point out the disciple's potential for future ministry.<sup>22</sup> This is the little/much principle in Luke 16:10, which relates to the Parable of the Talents: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; He that is unjust in little is unjust in much."

God first builds the worker, then uses the worker to build the work. This is so very important because effective lasting ministry is based upon "who you are," not so much on what you know or could do. This is why the process occurs over the course of a lifetime. In today's fast-paced age, it is tempting to want instant leaders, but placing disciples in leadership positions beyond their current ability only results in failure and frustration for both the new leader and those they lead.

This is why part of Investment involves five commitments on the part of the disciple. Not only do present leaders invest in disciples, but disciples need to invest in themselves to develop their personal leadership. Those selected for leadership must invest in developing a

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<sup>22</sup> Richard W. Clinton, *Selecting Developing Emerging Leaders* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas, 1996), 27.

quality devotional life. This involves regular communion with Him to foster a spiritual lifestyle of intimacy with God through the disciplines of prayer and the Word. Second, the disciple commits to faithful church attendance, along with attendance at church functions and activities as well as VOI regional and international events. Third, those selected as new leaders must show faithfulness and consistency in their tithes and offerings. This also means tithing their time in United We Can, which is VOI's world evangelism missions program.<sup>23</sup> The fourth commitment involves witnessing and learning how to share their faith. This exposes new leaders to the streets and the mission field. The fifth involves internalizing VOI's vision and making discipleship one of their personal values, seeing it as a lifestyle. Since LCG participants already engage in many of these commitments, this intentional aspect of Investment is a natural step in the discipleship journey.

Intentional discipleship is spiritual life formation that seeks to develop the inner life and positive character growth, which are essential to vibrant spirituality. Christlikeness, which is vital for effective and future ministry, begins to form within disciples during Investment. Disciples experience God and seek to reflect more Christlike characteristics in personality and in everyday relationships. They learn to recognize God's shaping hand and to watch for their human reactions, as they respond to the tests of life. How they respond to challenges from God is a clear indication. Those who engage in SIR ask, "Do disciples demonstrate a hunger to learn from God, or do they wiggle their way out of situations and challenges in a cunning and excusable way?"

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<sup>23</sup> Victory Outreach International, "United We Can."

This is why relationships are critical to making accurate assessments of people's character and learning to recognize leadership potential. Only through authentic and intimate relationships can wise decisions in people's lives genuinely happen. This may seem basic. However, this process of Investment keeps present leaders from selecting and empowering people simply because they are shiny, talented, and skillful in a particular ministry. For example, just because a music prodigy arrives to the church does not mean that person should be in charge of leading congregational worship.

The third aspect of SIR is Release. This is where present leaders begin to give over small ministry tasks progressively into the hands of apprentices and disciples. Leaders are still present. They observe, pray for them, offer accountability, and help new leaders feel confident about themselves. They delegate authority by empowering disciples and apprentices, allowing them to use their God-given power and authority to function in their gifts, talents, and skills. Although new leaders are consistently empowered during Release, present leaders still remain responsible for their ministry. *Building Leaders* teaches:

Empowerment is the intentional transfer of authority to an emerging leader within specified boundaries from an established leader who maintains responsibility for the ministry. Authority and responsibility are two words that are key in empowering. Empowerment is about authority. Authority is decision-making power. The heart of empowerment is the transfer of decision-making control over an area of ministry.<sup>24</sup>

In order to target the population and be able to select new leaders, the congregation needs to be prepared. This requires proper groundwork and recruitment. There needs to be congregational preparation, so emerging leadership can take its place in the Body of

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<sup>24</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every level of Our Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 22.



Christ. This has taken much labor from the bottom up and recruiting leaders of leaders from the raw material of converts. In its earliest stages, leadership development deals mostly with a participant's character, honesty, integrity, transparency, family life, work ethics, and reputation. This is the time of silver in the crucible, where we see the dross and impurities float to the top. Hopefully, they allow God to skim it off the top. Character must be the foundation for ministry, for without a godly character—no matter how gifted and talented the disciple—a ministry will be cut short and perhaps even damage the reputation of the Body of Christ within the congregation and broader community.

It takes time and patience to develop great leaders for ministry. Nevertheless, this continues to be a VOI challenge. There are certain things that equippers and trainers need to know, in order to be effective and productive in discipling men and women for the work of the ministry. As the children of Issachar knew the times and what Israel should do (1 Chronicles 12:21), so current leaders need to understand today's changing times.

The integration of LCGs works the ground and prepares the church for spiritual awakening and revitalization of recruiting and developing new leaders. It is essential that shepherding, nurturing, equipping, training, and developing God's people be done effectively and competently. Processes must remain open and flexible to address unexpected change.

### The Team Concept

The team concept is nothing new and has been operating since the beginning of time: "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). Here the team concept originates within the Trinity. Moses demonstrated teamwork, after taking his father-in-law's advice,

(Exodus 18:17-21). Getting a group together is not a team. A team has to have the same goals, vision, mission, and passion to see the overarching picture of the desired future for the whole team to benefit. There is a process that the entire team goes through before it really begins to see unity, cohesiveness, camaraderie, and productivity. Nevertheless, through it all, healthy teams come to know that trials and conflicts can be productive if the team responds in a healthy way. Stephen A. Macchia writes: “The team concept helps participants in this ministry strategy to remain committed.” Without commitment, a team never will be built; commitment is its backbone and anchor. Macchia goes on to say, “It is time for leaders and ministries to consider the truth about team building and its concept. The crux of the matter is teams are a lot of work! This is because they are filled with difficult people who are in the process of becoming, or struggling against, what God intends for them to be.”<sup>25</sup>

The team concept helps intergenerational participants become team players in this ministry strategy. This is why the emerging church must remain intentionally and intensively missional. The quality of our relationships is essential for cohesion and direction as a church and movement. There is a price for our working together as a team. While LCGs embrace the team concept by gathering together for spiritual growth and formation, here the team concept consists of embracing specific leadership values.

The first leadership value is for participants to be committed by giving their entire life to the lordship of Christ and to one another. The second leadership value is

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: 5 Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 18.

integration. This means that the team chooses the best way to distribute and integrate work, manage logistics and administration, and establish and enforce norms for one another. The third leadership value is discipline, which means that the members of the group—and not some external person—set high standards. “These standards arise from the compelling performance purpose to which all members are committed. Groups using the team discipline thrive on clearing a bar that others would not attempt.”<sup>26</sup> When teams get to a point that they are gelling together, the team as a whole determines its overall performance of the team, not the formal leader. “The group also sets the requirements for success and how and when to answer to evaluate progress.”<sup>27</sup>

Encouraging commitment and loyalty in team ministry is not difficult, due to what I call the “Pope Syndrome.” This term encapsulates my personal observation about Hispanic culture. The respect and honor many Latinos have for the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, its bishops and cardinals, tends to carry over into sort of a blind loyalty and faithfulness to Christian pastors and leaders. The gang-leader mentality of respect, and the commitment to drugs, deepens a willing sacrifice to lose family and life and merges into the team concept. However, the challenge lies in the aspect that everyone has a voice, and all team members can say what is on their mind without their words being taken as rebellion but rather as an important contributor to the overall and greater goal for the team.

Since the reality of the VOI context changes daily, the direction and nature of engagement keeps shifting. The team concept helps provide stability and responsiveness. All

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<sup>26</sup> Jon R. Katzenback and Douglas K. Smith, *The Discipline of Teams: A Mindbook-Workbook for Delivering Small Group Performance* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001), 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

team members collaborate to view the big picture from various perspectives. This requires a strong shift in the normal pattern of VOI thought and practice. However, before leadership can respond to the uncertainty that comes from constant change in cultural and sociological trends, such transformation must happen again fresh in our own lives. Victory Outreach cannot live in its past memories and victories. Christianity must be vibrant in the now, to make disciples and transmit the life that is within. Only then can leaders model and transmit life into disciples that takes root and changes them from glory to glory. This is what Luke meant when he said, “Everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (Luke 6:40).

### Common Vision and Mission

Teams need common vision and mission to remain cohesive and embrace forward momentum. The concept of team leadership arises naturally from *koinonia*, which is deeper and wider than just companionship or friendship. It is fellowship in the gospel (Philippians 1:5). It includes all who have yielded their lives to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Common vision and mission also arise by embracing the social reality of the Trinity. This means personal and corporate fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3), with the Spirit (Philippians 2:1), and with Jesus upon conversion and adoption into God’s family (1 Corinthians 1:9).<sup>28</sup>

This understanding of team in *koinonia* is a unique quality of Christian relationships, not only cementing the church and community but also activating it for ministry. Leaders must watch out for the early warning signs of its erosion. Erosion or interruptions can hinder the flow of team camaraderie within the Body of Christ. Max De Pree identifies six early

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 115.

warning signs of the degeneration of a movement, which are applicable to a team and the church. Teams fail to provide direction and maintain momentum within a church when they begin to “make tradeoffs,” “prefer comfort to ambiguity,” “look for control rather than challenge,” “trust job assignments rather than respecting individual gifts,” “allow rules to dominate decision making, or “become unable or unwilling to hold the group accountable.”<sup>29</sup>

These are the signs or things that can deteriorate and weaken VOI’s vision and mission. The quality of church relationships is vital to the future of VOI’s ministry. Only through understanding and living out the biblical essence of *koinonia* will the Body of Christ stay bonded together in love. Fostering *koinonia* produces deep love and obedience toward God and one another. In initiating this kind of relationship, *koinonia* based on a common vision and mission, Victory Outreach can cultivate a missional church to become effective and productive in any context where it is planted. In Ecclesiastes 4:12, this “threefold cord is not quickly broken” and is a strong symbol of the strength of fellowship.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Max De Pree, *Leading Without Power* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 29-31.

<sup>30</sup> Jim Winter, *Opening up Ecclesiastes*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster, MA: Day One Publications, 2005), 64.

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

This chapter describes the process of implementing and evaluating the intentional discipleship process through LIFE Cell Groups. It outlines the pilot project and presents an overarching timeline for implementation at Victory Outreach Riverside. This includes the plan for identifying, preparing, and reproducing group leaders as well as a strategy for recruiting group members. It also discusses literary, physical, and human resources that support project implementation. Finally, it offers a plan to utilize conversations and a questionnaire to evaluate and refine the new ministry initiative.

#### **Pilot Project and Timeline**

The pilot project involved the weekly training, equipping, and developing of new leaders for LCGs that took place from spring 2007 through summer 2008. The timeline occurred in three 12-week cycles with a 2-week reframing and retooling break after each one. Since LIFE stands for Leadership, Instruction, Fellowship, and Evangelism, the overall goal of LCGs was to intentionally disciple Christians by equipping, training, and developing throughout its groups and the church. A major emphasis was to understand and reach all

ages in the church, bridging multiple generations toward a common goal and vision. This is important, because all generations are connected by their place in time, with common boundaries and biblical character, and must have the same missional vision in the church.

In LIFE, the Leadership component involves observing and praying for potential leaders. This is done by using certain pastoral tools that offer different methods in gauging a participant's spiritual, emotional, and behavioral status. The SIR method is one of them and serves as a uniform process to select, invest in, and release leadership candidates into congregational ministry. Another useful tool in the Leadership component is the Discipleship Chart, which helps those who select leadership candidates to plan training processes and goals.<sup>1</sup> I created both SIR and the Discipleship Chart by evaluating how VOI traditionally has made disciples (e.g., converts in the recovery home, who learn a work ethic and then become assimilated into the church, learn to serve God as evangelists or pastors). I started to consider leadership from a missional perspective and think about how all the members of a church could be mobilized using a single process, so that those who are not called to be evangelists and pastors could have the same opportunity to develop their gifts and lead others in developing theirs.

The Adapted Model System (AMS) is another pastoral tool used in the pilot project and helps with the Instruction component to plan the training for the groups and individuals.<sup>2</sup> Instruction is gauged using the AMS and connects those being trained with who is training them. The MAT and guiding team do all the equipping, training, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for the SIR Chart and Appendix B for the Discipleship Chart.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Clinton, *Leadership Training Models* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas, 1984), 52. See Appendix C for the Adapted Model System.

developing in the church and take turns teaching Foundations of Faith segments; however, LCG leaders and ministry team leaders more and more are being employed as mentors, as reproduction happens.

Training and mentoring cannot be done if group members are not open with one another. This is why the Fellowship component is so important in the LIFE acronym. LCGs need to be creative with innovative ideas in order to break down barriers that have made many people anti-social. Icebreakers and games have been effective in breaking these walls down and have helped friendship and relationship blossom among multiple generations in the LCGs. Common experiences and weekly sharing help breed compassion. As fellowship begins to flow, instruction is made available to group members who desire to learn and grow. This sparks people to tell others of what God is doing in their lives.

This is where the Evangelism component comes into play. The group's main objective is to meet the needs of the congregants and community. This takes shape as those in LCGs reach out into the church's inactive members and beyond into the broader community. Such evangelism happens as group members love (support) one another, learn to follow Christ together, and serve. Since evangelism is one of VOI's values, mostly all of those at Victory Outreach Riverside were reached through evangelistic crusades, street rallies, dramas, and other types of evangelistic endeavors.

Using the pastoral tools, leaders adapted a plan for individuals and groups. The Discipleship Chart helps in identifying a person's spiritual status and moving the person from convert to being a disciple, working for the gospel, and towards being a leader or leader of leaders. Applying the AMS has helped to form a collective strategic plan for the



group and discern where a person might be particularly gifted for service. The AMS further identifies the reality of where they are spiritually. From this point, specific trainers are equipped to walk with ministry trainees, so they can thrive. Although this ministry initiative begins with a pilot project, the intentional discipleship process is designed for continuity and periodic assessment throughout the years. Each time the Adapted Model System is used to define reality for the individual and groups, disciples and LCGS move into maturity. In this way, all who participate in LCGs or ministry teams have a way to gauge their own process as disciples engaged in spiritual formation.

### **Leadership Development**

The leadership development, selection, and training has occurred alongside the discipleship recruiting process and continues to this very day. The pastoral tools let those who shepherd the process to identify where leaders and disciples are in the training and recruiting process. The MAT and guiding team constantly re-evaluate to see if the intentional discipleship process is reaching its training goals. Sometimes we have needed to adjust the training, because we are not getting the results and quality that we want. The quality control component is built into the AMS and indicates what needs to be modified in the training process. It asks, “Where is our ministry now?” An usher team might ask this question along with those involved in security/operations or ministering in the recovery homes. As members of LCGs ponder their answer, they also ask themselves, “What are my personal objectives for reaching ministry goals now?” and “Where would I like to be six months?” These simple yet standardized questions become leadership benchmarks that constantly assess where people are in their journey as disciples and/or emerging leaders.

As Victory Outreach Riverside has launched new groups that have reproduced from the original ones, the pastoral staff and MAT closely monitor them and continue training and equipping, wherever they may be in the community or church life. Given the plural nature of postmodernity, basic instruction in worldviews is part of the training of all LCG leaders and their apprentices.<sup>3</sup> Also, they receive training in Fred Holland's theory of how cognitive input, hands-on ministry experience, dynamic reflection, and spiritual formation interconnect for growth in Christian leadership.<sup>4</sup> This provides important information for exercising healthy leadership while remaining a humble disciple, particularly for those who become leaders of leaders and need to manage expectations as they raise up others.

Overall leadership development happens through the five E's and three C's. New leaders are taught the foundational values and principles of exalting Christ, envisioning, evangelizing, equipping people for ministry, and establishing individuals and groups in spiritual maturity. This is presented through specific Scriptures at the personal level and at the ministry level during the two-week retooling periods. They also are reminded of the core values, mission, and purpose of VOI's ministry cause to understand how the business of corporate church and how it functions as a family in community. This portion of leadership development aligns with VOI's mission statement and vision and is taught through the lens of how Victory Outreach Riverside operates as a ministry in its local

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<sup>3</sup> Information comes from *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 1999 ed., s.v. "worldviews." See Appendix D for the Worldviews Chart that is given to LCG leaders and other mentors, so they can assess what disciples believe. Understanding distinct worldviews is important in light of postmodern thought.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Holland, "Theological Education in Context and Change: The Influence of Leadership Training and Anthropology on Ministry for Church Growth" (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), 10-13, 86-110, 280-282. See Appendix E.

community.<sup>5</sup> Leadership development occurs with the perspective of Aubrey Malphurs. He says, “All leaders are values driven, and the ministries they build are expressions of their values. This is because leaders identify closely with their organizations and commit so much of themselves to those ministries.”<sup>6</sup> Since leadership development happens within the VOI context, they have chosen our core set of values for themselves. Since group members look at leaders as role models to follow, it is vital that they exhibit a lifestyle consistent with those values.<sup>7</sup>

Within the VOI context, leadership credibility is crucial. Malphurs makes the following observation:

Leaders shape people’s values and they instill these values more through what they do than through what they say. If their behavior is consistent with their values, they will infuse their leadership with large doses of credibility. If, however, their walk does not match their talk, if they articulate one set of values for the church but operate with a different set, followers will view them as hypocrites, and they will lose all credibility.<sup>8</sup>

That is why the ministry initiative of intentional discipleship leadership development focuses so much on trainers who can walk their talk.

In the 2007-2008 pilot project, the first three months (twelve weeks) of leadership development training consisted of evaluation and observation. This involved assessing the needs of the participants and identifying goals for each stage of their spiritual position at

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<sup>5</sup> Victory Outreach International, “Vision,” <http://victoryoutreach.org/vision/> (accessed October 27, 2016); Victory Outreach International, “Mission Statement.”

<sup>6</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

the time. Every participant had to go through the Foundations of Faith. These trainings took place on Wednesday evenings and replaced what used to be the mid-week church service. In Foundations of Faith I, they learned doctrine from a Pentecostal perspective of beliefs and the basic practice of the five E's and three C's.<sup>9</sup> This was the convert-to-disciple phase on the Discipleship Chart.

The second three months (twelve weeks), six months into training, comprised Foundations of Faith II: learning spiritual disciplines (study of God's Word, prayer, evangelism, tithing, and fellowship) and how they tie in with VOI's ministry philosophy. Disciples also received assignments to read books from VOI authors such as *Treasures out of Darkness* by Arguinzoni and his wife, which gives the history and vision of Victory Outreach International. Another reading assignment was *Internalizing the Vision* by Arguinzoni<sup>10</sup> and *Defying the Odds* by Ed Morales and Mitzi Morales,<sup>11</sup> which together convey the hard times in ministry that can await a pioneering pastor and his wife. These narratives contribute significant insight into how a disciple is trained and prepared for VOI ministry. Saul García's *Semper Fidelis: The Character of a Leader* discusses how vital for ministry is integrity of the heart, which is a lost commodity in today's world. Character is the foundation of ministry and establishes a crucial inward quality in the role of a leader.<sup>12</sup> *Blood In, Blood Out* by Art Blajos was assigned to offer a powerful testimony of a

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendices F and G for the five E's and three C's, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Sonny Arguinzoni, *Internalizing the Vision* (Green Forest, AK: Victory Outreach Pub., 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Ed Morales and Mitzi Morales, *Defying the Odds* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Saul García, *Semper Fidelis*, (San Dimas, CA: Eldership Publications, 2005).

converted Mexican mafia hitman, who is one of VOI's world evangelists.<sup>13</sup> Reading these stories about the pioneers helps to ingrain new leaders with the passion behind the vision and values of VOI and what practicing one's faith can look like.

Throughout the trainings, discerning conversations began to unfold among the pastoral staff and newly forming potential leaders. The pastoral staff who initially comprised the MAT and the guiding team all along have been hands-on through the whole process of making disciples into leaders of leaders. These books and personal testimonies of congregants have given insight, understanding, and a corporate narrative of how Victory Outreach ministry started and expanded to become a denominational movement. For people coming from traditional churches or another lifestyle who do not relate to VOI's culture and philosophy of ministry, these stories, testimonies, and books shed light and insight on why Victory Outreach does the things that it does, risking to engage in activities that most traditional churches would not dare to do.

The next three months (twelve weeks), nine months into equipping, training, and developing, was directed more toward helping participants discover their spiritual gifts in the assessment inventory listed in Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:1-16, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. This comprised Foundations of Faith III. Newly forming leaders were taught that their natural gifts were present from birth, usually discovered through an autobiographical interview and observation of consistent behavior along with personality and behavioral assessments. These examine various aspects of the personality, such as temperament, role preferences, leadership style, learning styles, and other areas observed

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<sup>13</sup> Art Blajos, *Blood In, Blood Out* (East Sussex: Monarch, 1996).

from their persona. We also measure their skills and learning abilities, their motivational ability, approaches to thinking and problem solving, and performance. Some of the assessment tools are from the *Equipping Church Guidebook*.<sup>14</sup>

In the final three months of the training, we began to scout out the leaders and to use the SIR method once again along with the AMS. By this time, converts had progressed fairly well along the Discipleship Chart in the leader phase category. At this point, trainers began to seek discernment regarding the specific calling on the lives of trainees. Here we used Saddleback's "S.H.A.P.E." as an assessment tool.<sup>15</sup> Disciples started to discover their God-given gift(s), along with their heart's desire, according to the abilities that God has granted them. They began to accept their originality, personality, and past experiences. As mentors, we helped them focus on their calling and purpose in life. At this stage of leadership development, Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* was required reading,<sup>16</sup> because he introduces the five-tool method of S.H.A.P.E. as an acronym for Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience. *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose of Life* by Erik Rees was another assigned resource.<sup>17</sup> It expounds more profoundly on each tool. This leadership development has been very effective in helping new leaders find their place in ministry in serving God.

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<sup>14</sup> Sue Mallory and Brad Smith, *The Equipping Church Guidebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 290.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 236.

<sup>17</sup> Erik Rees, *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

The purpose in meeting the goals of each assessment throughout the annual training that occurs cyclically is simply to determine what is working, what is not, and what is needed in order to become better equipped to serve others in the future. This has meant assessing what is already in place as well as evaluating the effectiveness of each component. This involves asking questions about the process, tracking the systems for each process, and staying connected with people involved in its facilitation.

### **Analysis, Assessments, and Insights**

The MAT and guiding team have been the ones in charge of quality control. Since their conception in fall of 2007, both teams have gone through many changes in leadership, successes and failures, and gradually have evolved into what the church has today. They have learned that “leadership is about connecting, not controlling. It is about bringing people together for the purpose of creative synergy. We have found out that we must struggle to create the right chemistry of human relations, so that those they lead spark ideas in one another urging each other forward in the ministry and outreach.”<sup>18</sup> The MAT has always consisted of eight personal trainers who are licensed ministers and experienced in ministry. These train the LCG leaders and provide training throughout the church.

The initial four LCGs, with ten to fifteen members in each, were birthed by the initial assessment of the church’s needs. There was a desire to learn, and Sunday morning sermons were not enough. They formed in response to a realization that serving was much needed throughout the church also, and people with the gifts of helps wanted to make themselves available. They also formed, because there were congregants with life-

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<sup>18</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 106.

controlling issues who needed support to cope with everyday life and hungered for fellowship. Those who have a natural compassion for the lost, who consistently share their faith with people, began to group together to focus on evangelism. This is how the Learning, Loving, Reaching Out, and Serving (support) LCGs established their missional focus.

In response to these needs that surfaced, the MAT and guiding team gradually developed the structure, purpose, and vision for each group with objectives to grow and reproduce themselves in other people through the church and community. We implemented these four types of groups in the church and began promoting them for people who could identify with each group. Groups began to function more broadly into the community and along with church members as participants. In 2009, the number of LCGs increased to five. In 2010, they multiplied to eight. By 2014, there were nine LCGs, with roughly seven to fifteen people in each group.

In 2007, there were 130 people in the congregation and four small groups. When these groups were repurposed into LCGs, growth happened. Now the congregation numbers about 200 hundred in membership, and upwards of 40 percent of congregants are involved in LCGs. Victory Outreach Riverside is seeing success in reproducing both leaders and groups, which has resulted in many people being mobilized missionally and the congregation growing by seventy people.<sup>19</sup> Also, there are now newly equipped leaders of leaders who have joined the guiding team to help train others in this missional endeavor.

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<sup>19</sup> Ushers, *Official Head Count* (Riverside, CA: Victory Outreach Riverside, 2007-2016).



With respect to discipling and leadership development within the younger generation, much has happened. Prior to the ministry strategy's launch in 2007, Victory Outreach Riverside had just a general youth group containing about twenty people and no young people serving as apprentices or leaders in the congregation. A single LCG for young people formed during the first year and then grew into three LCGs, with about fifteen participants per group ranging in age from thirteen to mid-thirties. Since there are a total of sixty young people throughout the church, this means that 75 percent of the younger generation have become active participants in discipleship groups. Each LCG contains an apprentice leader from the younger generation, and all of these LCG apprentices currently serve as visible congregational leaders in other ministries. There are a total of six young people now functioning as congregational leaders: three as door greeters, three as ushers, and one in the children's ministry. An additional three are apprentices on ministry teams: one in the security ministry and two in the children's ministry. These leaders and apprentices range in age from seventeen years old into their early thirties.

The MAT and LCG leaders serving the church and community have mobilized inactive church members from all generations into existing LCGs, which evangelize non-believers in the communities. Reaching these new converts coming from dysfunctional homes, anti-social behavior, incarceration of many years, and a life of abusing their bodies and minds has been a challenge; but the joy congregants experience in seeing these new converts come to receive the Lord has made those who were previously inactive become an active part of the group.

The ultimate goal for these groups is to reproduce themselves after their kind, within the timeline process of one year. The timeline process has become a yearly cyclical event. It now includes all the church departments, their head leaders and assistants, plus the LCGs with their leaders and apprentices ministering and guiding each group's disciples.

The first assessment took place about a year after the LCGs started, in the fall of 2007, followed by the summer of 2008. The evaluation was done at Prayer Mountain Retreat Center in San Bernardino, California with the MAT. During these meetings, we began to identify prospective leaders along with the group facilitators and hospitality leaders and sought to initialize a new crop of new leadership for the following year. In our discernable pastoral dialogue among the MAT, strengths and weaknesses surfaced for review.

This was part of defining reality with the pastoral tools. Using the AMS, we analyzed our training goals to see if we had fulfilled them. Together as a team, we discerned situations and challenges that had occurred in the groups. Based on that information, we began adapting to present challenges by modifying the training to reach the stated goals established in the previous year. This style of assessment has become a habit, so now throughout the year the MAT has the liberty to adjust any part of the training system if it seems that we are not going to make the mark.

We search for anything that has transpired throughout the year that we might have missed—for example, if a group is languishing or has fallen into a mundane disposition. This also can happen with departments of ministry. Using the resources mentioned earlier in this chapter, we first look at the top leadership and begin to evaluate everything that contributes to make a group or team a success or a failure. Then we just make the

adjustment and keep going forward. Since leaders are formed within an environment of cyclical evaluation, using the pastoral resources, they are willing to take risks. In this way, as they develop, the leader's capacity begins to expand and gain influence and credibility among followers and peers.

Any strengths that are observed, such as components operating successfully, become something we try to implement, using the same methods and principles, with the other groups and ministries. Re-evaluation is about constant training as part of the learning process and ministry procedure. The best practices and leadership guidance come from the MAT and guiding team when we all see the importance of modeling before our disciples what we want to see in them. The best dialogues have come from informal training one on one, which is where challenges into ministry practicums come visibly into their view and the little/much principle in Luke 16:10 begins its operation.

More leadership guidance and responsibility are given to the leaders at this point. Leadership tasks bring preparatory hands-on training and ministry experience firsthand. The MAT's fingerprints are soiled into all the training, especially the senior pastor's thumbprint, which promotes and enables the vision, values, beliefs, and philosophy of ministry of VOI to permeate throughout the training from the beginning. This involves initiating and transmitting the core values throughout the training. These core values and beliefs need to be communicated if the DNA is going to be transmitted into younger generations intentionally and deliberately. Finally, the MAT is the vision and value

clarifier. This involves regularly rethinking and further refining the vision and values of the church in the process of becoming missional.<sup>20</sup>

In order to deposit or transmit values, principles, doctrine, and philosophy into future generations, leaders need to be disciplers (e.g., trainer, equipper, developer) first. While the AMS is used to identify and assess the current reality of leaders, the Worldviews Chart is used to test whether the leader is succumbing to theism, deism, polytheism, pantheism, finite-goddism, or naturalism in their perspective of the world.<sup>21</sup> This is because we are working with the raw material of postmodern mindsets, and many new converts come with one of these worldviews. When the worldview is known to the trainer, the process can begin intentionally and progress with the purpose of helping trainees renew their mind according to the Word of God (Romans 12:2). Through conversations and emails, trainees' worldviews expose their philosophy of life, values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations in light of family upbringing and cultural influences.

Another insight has been how necessary it is to require resources and solid planning. Equipping, training, and developing need to be properly scheduled throughout the year, in order for training, LCG activities, and congregational schedules to merge together in unity and not crumble into discord and disorganization. Facilities, teaching materials, and curricula have needed to be developed and sometimes revised for the training and at different levels. This also includes finding new meeting spaces for ministry groups and fellowship, which has been vitally important for the unity of Victory Outreach Riverside.

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<sup>20</sup> Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 1999 ed., s.v. "worldviews." See Appendix D.

Another insight has been the need for childcare at times. In responding to this need, we have discovered that the youth can benefit twofold by fundraising and being trained to teach and care for children. However, if resources and planning are not considered in the equation, frustration and discouragement follow. In equipping the saints for the work of ministry, leaders are learning to avoid repercussions and drawbacks due to unpreparedness. This stems from a desire not to hamper or stifle the plan and purposes of God.

From the yearly evaluations and dialogues among the MAT and leaders, ministry practicums have begun to develop for further leadership development training. This is for leaders who have proven themselves in reproducing LCGs or building the ministry they have amidst other challenges within the church or community. In particular, emphasizing the team concept at this point in the leader's life more intentionally and deliberately has been a lesson learned. Character, maturity, and integrity are the areas that are tested at this period. Leaders are realizing that as the team begins to build trust and understanding, issues that are more sensitive need to be discussed openly. At times, even more unexpectedly, conflict between team members is actually seen now as helping "relationships to become interdependent over time. Where there is trust and mutual appreciation, sharp disagreement develops new insights."<sup>22</sup> It is about learning to love and submit to one another, for the sake of the kingdom.

The present challenge now is to continue to form in Victory Outreach Riverside an internal equipping culture, built by the top-level leadership (MAT) that creates the environment needed to support the equipping ministry of the church. The goal for future

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<sup>22</sup> Gibbs, *LeadershipNext*, 107.

assessment is to see if the present equipping system can serve for all ministries of the church and each step in preparing, connecting, and equipping people for the work of the ministry in even broader ways.

LCG leaders submit weekly reports to the guiding team, who then discusses them with the MAT quarterly. If the guiding team mentor feels that a LCG leader needs to be aware of some protruding factors on the report, than the mentor will address the issue(s) with the leader before the quarter ends and report it to the MAT. The weekly report forms were created by the MAT along with the guiding team. It is for obtaining information on the status of each LCG, so we can assist the LCG leader and apprentices to objectively reach the goals they set for their group. The questions on the form gives the guiding team insight regarding the LCGs, the performance of leaders, and if they are focusing on their goals and reproducing healthy disciples. The team is looking for spiritual formation, growth, and healthy relationship. The questions are designed to give us those answers. For instance, they ask about teaching content; discussions about the five E's and three C's; how many men, women, and children attend the group weekly; and if attendance is consistent. There are also questions asking if worship, giving, and fellowship occur and about the ambience and expectations of people in the group.

The purpose for this monitoring every two weeks is so we can assist them in reframing, retooling, and re-visioning with the intended goals that they have set for themselves. Many times we have seen that some groups fall into a passive mode and get stuck in a routine. Sometimes we had to close the group and channel the people into another group that was thriving and growing. We have noticed that sometimes LCG

leaders begin to work many hours and cannot give themselves to preparation for a healthy Bible study. This begins to be noticeable in the reports as dropping attendance, comments from group members, and whether or not people are not visibly passionate and growing.

Another type of assessment happens quarterly at the different levels of leadership. As the senior pastor, I meet with the MAT and guiding team mentors to review their progress/meeting goals from the information on their LCG leader's stack of weekly reports. Then each one of the mentors meets personally with the LCG leaders under their care for an informal meeting to encourage, pray, and develop an action plan for the leader's personal growth and group growth. That is why every quarter there is specialized training for the groups. This helps them to focus the LCG back on spiritual formation, growth, and reproduction through intentional discipleship in the groups. Also, as senior pastor, I check in with each LCG leader through informal conversation on the five E's and three C's to find out how they are feeling about their spiritual formation. This often happens over a time of coffee and conversation. We discuss the reports and their action plan for the quarter and end it with a retreat every year. We have been doing this since we started the pilot project in 2007 and the first retreat with the LCG leaders and apprentices in 2008.

Another assessment happens in a yearly evaluation of the quarterly reports. These evaluations are sent via email to LCG group participants and leaders asking for their honest feedback and to inquire whether or not their needs are being met and if we can assist in any way. The emails ask them to fill out an evaluation questionnaire, which allows them to express personal concern and needs, along with any prayer request that

they may have. The questionnaires are also available at the information booth in the church lobby. About 30 percent of participants respond to these emails and questionnaires.

As the senior pastor and a MAT member, I present an analysis of the results of the reports to the mentors of the MAT along with the guiding team. Together we discuss what is working or not. We develop an action plan that is produced by seriously thinking through the reasons for its successes and failures, which helps us reflect and define reality. We have learned through our experience that candidates for LCGs must be properly trained, gifted in teaching and communicating, and observed to see if they really have the passion and vision and capacity to produce growth and reproduction. The weekly reports, quarterly assessments, and responses to emails and questionnaires reveal if leaders and apprentices have a tenacious and pioneering spirit that is not going to give up when the challenges of faith and vision for the group come to infuse doubt and fear in them. The tools and frameworks that are used in training and assessment help us continually to think and evaluate the progress of church life in order to be what God wants in Victory Outreach Riverside's missional leaders.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper identified the main essential components and practices that are needed to ensure that VOI's vision, values, theology, and philosophy of ministry can continue into the younger generation. This involved an initiative at Victory Outreach Riverside that engaged people in new ministry within today's constantly changing environment yet without altering its original DNA. This is being accomplished through a missionally grounded intentional discipleship strategy transmitted within a strong theological framework that fulfills VOI's understanding of *missio Dei*, to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This endeavor began as simple reflection in 2007, when I started purposely thinking how I was going to instill VOI's vision, values, beliefs, and philosophy of ministry within the younger generations in the congregation I lead and regional churches and organizations for which I am responsible. I wanted it to be the same DNA that was deposited in me through the first generation of disciples that Pastor Sonny disciplined. This began with reminiscing about the narratives and historical events that brought influence and impacted change in my life. That is what I wanted to transmit into my disciples, so they could continue doing the same.

First, a solid understanding of VOI's unique history and ministry context needed to be explored. Then a theological framework needed to be set forth to ensure that all beliefs about ministry, Christian growth, and leadership were biblical and according to VOI's ministry tradition. Coming from a rich Hispanic Pentecostal background, VOI has an inheritance and legacy to pass on to its future generations of Christ-followers. In carrying

out this ministry initiative, laying the biblical foundation in people's lives was the first thing that the Missional Action Team did and must continue to do. Knowing that God has given us a vision has been essential for the calling that we have for the target group to whom we reach out.

The AI assessment that we conducted with interviewees, in attending to their narratives, acted as a stethoscope in discerning and listening to the rhythm and heartbeat of Victory Outreach Riverside. It provided insight regarding where to begin to apply healing to the hurts, wounds, and feelings of abandonment that have accumulated over the past thirty-seven years of the church's existence. This was necessary in order to acknowledge the transitions of six pastors of which I am the seventh, because so much upheaval has brought many insecure feelings regarding the future of the congregation.

In making the assessments of the church with the chosen MAT, along with the guiding team, we came up with tools and teaching outlines that have helped us equip current and upcoming leaders. The Discipleship Chart is used to identify where each individual is spiritually. The Adapted Model System helps define the reality of their present situation and establish spiritual and ministerial objectives and goals for their growth process. SIR helps mentors select potential leaders and aids them both in collaborating with acquiring knowledge and hands-on ministry training. Finally, key reading assignments and biblically grounded teaching outlines for the five E's and three C's puts leaders on the trajectory of VOI's vision, mission, and philosophy of ministry and grounds them in a Pentecostal perspective. This has led Victory Outreach Riverside to a new way of doing things that seemed foreign and unfamiliar to the congregation and were

not even considered. However, all of this missional conversation and effort has birthed a beautiful narrative; a new way of doing ministry has begun to take shape. The church is realizing that God never left them, as He promises, but all the time was working in His people even through all the disappointment and letdowns (Genesis 28:15). He has been here, ready to do a new thing.

The results of the training, equipping, and developing throughout the nearly ten years of my pastoral position have been a challenge. *The Pastoral Readiness Workbook* along with the *Mission-Shaped Churches Workbook* brought much direction and insight to this project. It has served as a guide to raise up new leadership and strengthen the congregation's discipleship factor, with the goal to become a missional church that reproduces after its kind.

The pastoral toolkit, some of which is contained in the Appendices, has offered significant assessment and inventory data to gauge the status of participants as they begin to go through the cyclical training program that we developed by assessing the church's needs from a missional perspective. The LCGs have played a very crucial and essential part of the growth of Victory Outreach Riverside and have made the relationships of the church strong and stable, mobilizing them for ministry. Consistency and accountability with LCGs and ministry teams have been the key along with cultivating an ambience filled with passion and vision. It has been exciting to see how the number of LCGs has doubled in recent years, even though at different times the MAT had to recall some of them due to lack of growth, loss of purpose, or falling into routine.

Another thing that is important to mention is regarding the factors and forces that have shaped the life and ministry at Victory Outreach Riverside. Our religious heritage and cultural context have given us some pre-religious presuppositions that have shaped our way of doing ministry, becoming ingrained in our leadership style. Most of us came from Catholic backgrounds and grew up in a Hispanic culture, divided by subcultures of gangs and drugs. This has bred into us a hunger to be unique converts to Christ, committed and loyal spiritual warriors and ambassadors in His name. Leading with such hard commitment and strong allegiance has been good; yet, at the same time, it runs the risk of becoming corrupt and ugly if we do not remain humble enough to grow, mature, and be open to other types of leadership styles and methodologies.

Transformation means nothing, if one has not truly changed. Being taught just one style, and coming from a variety of male-dominated Hispanic cultures, those who comprise VOI seem to lean towards exercising an authoritative behavior in their leadership style. This is the reason why the movement faces its current challenges. We have not been taught or exposed to the benefits that different leadership styles can bring to address changing situations. Tones of machismo blind us from being Christlike. It is only by the grace of God that we have been used to disciple people with passion and vision to do the work of the ministry. VOI has come a long way, and missionally innovative methods are what God now calls us into.

Throughout this discussion, I have emphasized the high cost of leadership, especially in relation to postmodernity in a missional setting. It entails showing love in the face of criticism and having a tender heart and a thick skin. It faces the loneliness and

challenges confronting any potential leader who desires to exercise God-given gifts in today's world. This upcoming generation needs to learn not to be overwhelmed by the challenges and opportunities that they have with few resources at hand. It is important to learn how to be content with small things while nurturing a big vision, just like Paul (Philippians 4:12). It means having the faith to believe that small beginnings can lead to significant developments. Leaders from the younger generation share the same risks and vulnerability as everyone around them. They have to learn how to confide and trust in God, just as their VOI fathers and mothers did. They have no safe place to withdraw but into the arms of God and His unfailing love (Psalm 13:5).

These upcoming leaders have the narratives of past spiritual mentors and leaders who have gone before them, with the same obstacles and challenges that they now may be facing. It is vital to see where God has brought us thus far. Only God could have transformed a motley crew of ex-gangsters and former drug addicts into a viable movement that turns the upside-down inner cities right side up. Victory Outreach International seeks to help transform lives one at a time in entire families, communities, regions, states, and nations. It is as Zechariah 4:10 asserts: "For whoever had despised the day of small things shall rejoice."

This project has identified a range of challenges that VOI must address. We may say that VOI is not traditional, but in time any organization or church becomes set in its ways and its methods become conventional. Now is the time for VOI churches to transition into mission-shaped faith communities, to remain on the cutting edge of urban ministry. The arrival of the information age stresses the necessity to see leadership as a

function of the team concept, recognizing the distinct contribution of individual team members in terms of their personality, gifting, and experience. Leadership combines character, charisma, and confidence. In the context of VOI churches, most if not all leadership will emerge from within the congregation. At one level or another, every person is exercising some measure of leadership over their personal lives, in peer groups and families, and within the structures of the local church. Only from this perspective can VOI churches understand leadership to be a value that infuses the whole community.

In order for VOI to continue its legacy throughout the coming generations, it must identify and facilitate the next generation of leadership, intentionally and deliberately. We must provide training that is accessible, appropriate in terms of the topics addressed and the manner in which courses are taught, which demonstrates connectedness between theory and the practice of ministry. Such training is developmental, not traditional. The selection process needs to be proactive, as in the SIR method that this project uses, identifying the people on the ground level who show the most potential in ministry. Such people have a desire to learn, to be trained and equipped, and to be guided by the best resources available. A true leader leaves a legacy that lives on in the actions of many people.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is the supreme example of this, and the Church provides two thousand years of evidence.

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<sup>1</sup> De Pree, *Leading Without Power*, 163.

APPENDIX A

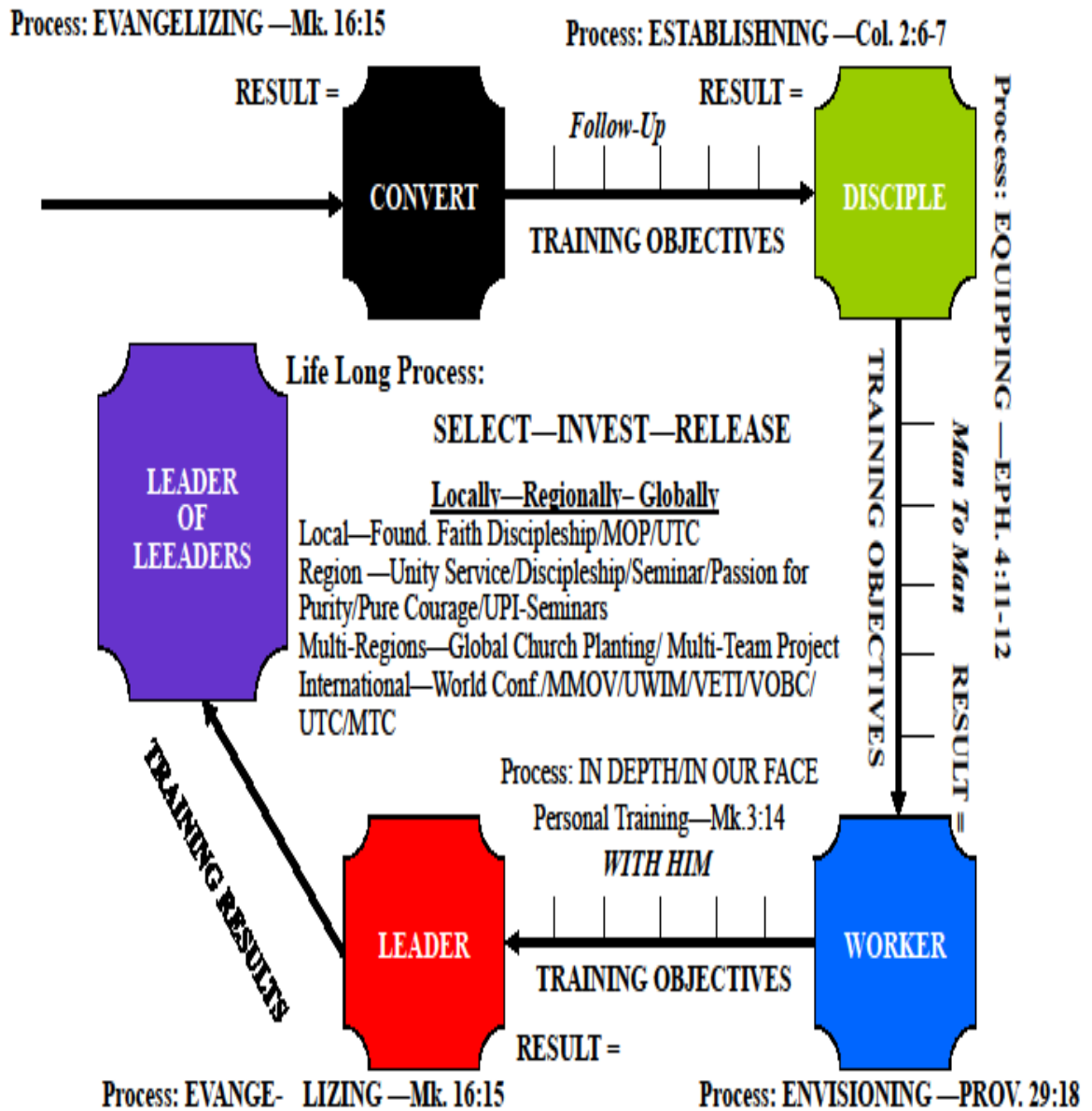
SIR CHART

<b>SELECT</b>	<b>INVEST</b>	<b>RELEASE</b>
PRAYER/INTERCEDE	TIME & ENERGY	TO MINISTRY TASK
OBSERVE	VABES'S (SEE DEFINITION BELOW)	TO SERVE OTHERS
FAITHFUL	RESOURCES/FINANCES	TO MINISTER TO OTHERS
AVAILABLE	ACADEMIA SPONSORSHIP	TO DISCIPLE OTHERS
TEACHABLE	VISION/MISSION/PASSION	TO REPRODUCE IN OTHERS
POOR IN SPIRIT	PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY	TO BECOME MISSIONAL
	DOCTRINE/PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE	

***VABE = VALUES /ABILITIES/BELIEFS/ EXPECTATIONS***

APPENDIX B

DISCIPLESHIP CHART





APPENDIX C

ADAPTED MODEL SYSTEM

*Col.3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

**ADAPTED MODEL SYSTEM**

Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

PURSUE EXCELLENCE...

**Define Reality**

Where our ministry is at now.

These are my objectives to reach my goal

This is my goal in where our ministry will be in 6 months

1

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

N  
E  
X  
T  
L  
E  
V  
E  
L

1. Ushers
2. Greeters
3. Security & Operations
4. Worship/Media/Musicians
5. Musicians
6. Childrens Ministry
7. KIDZ GANG
8. Royal Rangers
9. Missionaries
10. CNG/Hr. Higher's
11. Offices/Receptionist
12. Hospitality/Food Sales
13. LCG's
14. Young Adults
15. Pulpit Staff/Pastoral Staff
16. Media/Sound/Vision Outlet
17. Intercessory Prayer/G.A.P.P.
18. GANG
19. Inner-City Recovery Homes
20. YETI/VOBC
21. United We Can
22. UPI
23. UWIM
24. AMOV
25. U.T.C.

*Gauge your ministry by:*  
 1. Community/family/Fellowship  
 2. Corporate/business/organizing  
 3. Cause/vision/mission/soldier  
 And by the 5 E's  
 1 Exalting Christ  
 2 Envisioning you Team  
 3 Evangelizing our community  
 4 Equipping your Team  
 4 Establishing your Team

4

**Quality Control:  
 Making sure I reach  
 my goal**

Team Captain \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Robert Clinton, *Leadership Training Models* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas, 1984), 52.

APPENDIX D

WORLDVIEWS CHART

COMPARISON CHART OF MAJOR WORLDVIEWS\*

Worldview	God	God's Relationship to the World	Ethics	Miracles	Man's Makeup	Man's Nature	Jesus Christ	Man's Destiny
<b>THEISM</b> Christianity Judaism Islam	One Infinite Personal God	Transcendent and Immanent	Moral Absolutes	Possible and Actual	Body and Soul Immortal	Morally Depraved	Christianity: God Judaism: Man Islam: Prophet	Resurrection; Heaven or Hell
<b>DEISM</b>	One Infinite Personal God	Transcendent and some Immanent	Moral Absolutes	Possible and Actual - Not Actual Today	Body Mortal; Soul Immortal	Various	Good Man	Annihilation or Reward (State of Mind)
<b>FINITE THEISM</b>	One Finite Personal God	Transcendent and Immanent	Relative	Possible - Not Actual	Body Mortal; Soul Immortal	Basically Good	Good Man	Some Kind of Reward of the Soul
<b>PANENTHEISM</b>	One Potentially Infinite - Actually Finite God	Potentially Transcendent and Immanent	Relative	Impossible	Body Mortal; Soul Immortal (some)	Basically Good	Good Man	No Literal Destiny Besides Memory in God's Mind
<b>PANTHEISM</b> Hinduism Buddhism Taoism New Age, etc.	One Infinite Impersonal God	God is the World	Relative	Impossible	Body Mortal; Soul Immortal	Based on Karma	A god; Enlightened	Reincarnation; Nirvana
<b>POLYTHEISM</b> Hinduism Mormonism Neo-paganism Wicca, etc.	Multiple Finite gods	Gods are Immanent	Relative	Possible and Actual	Body Mortal; Soul Immortal	Good	One of many gods	Various Views on Reward and Punishment
<b>NATURALISM</b> Atheism Agnosticism Secular Humanism Existentialism Nihilism Marxism, etc.	No God	None	Relative - Situation Ethics	Impossible	Body Mortal - No Soul	Good, Environment Causes Evil	Religious Leader; Criminal; Mere man; Legend	Non-existence

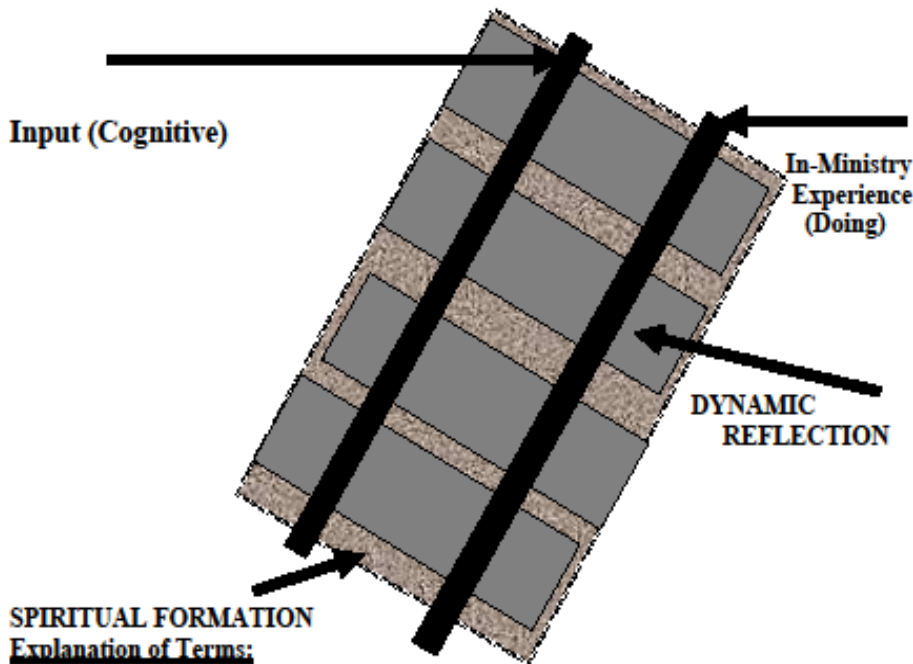
\*Categories of worldviews adapted from Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), p. 787.

## APPENDIX E

### HOLLAND'S TWO-TRACK ANALOGY ADAPTED

**Introduction:** Fred Holland modified the basic split-rail fence analogy to include a vital element of learning very important in leadership—that of spiritual formation. He borrowed the term from Catholic educators.

**Formation** is considered to be the process by which the student-candidate for the ministry is influenced and directed in spiritual growth and development. Every Catholic institution for theological training has a spiritual director who is responsible for the care of the souls and conduct of the students. (Holland 1978:8)



**Input** expands "cognitive input" to include affective and experiential skills. This Expansion recognizes the integrated nature of content and functional skills and inner value changes.

**In - Ministry Experience** any process items in the local situation that will develop any experiential aspect of leadership skills, develop spiritual gifts, or bring about experiential learning of input.

**Dynamic Reflection** a two-fold thinking process which teaches how to correlate input ideas relevantly to experience and spiritual formation and how to draw out from experience ideas which influence input and spiritual formation.

**Spiritual Formation** This skill is best taught by imitation modeling. It brings accountability to learning and spiritual formation. The foundation focus of input, dynamic reflection and in-ministry experience. The development of the trainee as a person of God who can more fully experience God and Reflect that experience of God in productive ministry.

*Source:* Fred Holland, "Theological Education in Context and Change: The Influence of Leadership Training and Anthropology on Ministry for Church Growth" (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), 10-13, 86-110, 280-282.

## APPENDIX F

### THE FIVE E'S

#### **Foundational Values and Principles**

*“Where there is no vision the people perish”. Proverbs. 29:18*

Our understanding and application of the 5 E's foundational values and principles is extremely important to the accomplishment of our vision. We must Exalt, Evangelize, Envision, Equip, and Establish.

#### **I. EXALTING CHRIST – (John 12:32)**

Meaning: To raise high; to rise to power, praise and honor.

##### A. At a Personal Level:

1. Accept Him as Lord of your life. - Galatians 4:6-7
2. Always giving Him all the glory. - Psalm 29:2
3. Allow Him to abide in you and you in Him. - John 15:5
4. Live Christ-like lives. - Ephesians 5:1
  - By living a good testimony for the Lord. - Romans 6:15-18
  - By living a Holy life. - 1 Thessalonians 4:6

##### B. At the Ministry Level:

1. A spirit of Prayer in the church - Isaiah 56:7b
2. Dynamic Worship/Music, Victory Outreach songs. Attention must be given to the worship of the Lord; Make sure a greater segment of the songs focus on the adoration of God and His Son. - Psalms 33:3
3. The presence of God in their services. - Zephaniah 1:7a
4. The Word of God taught and preached in each local church. - Romans 10:17

#### **II. ENVISIONING PEOPLE – (Proverbs 29:18)**

Meaning: To transmit the vision of Victory Outreach to others through ministry and discipleship.

##### **The Vision came forth from the Word of God**

*“I will go before you and make the crooked places straight. I will break into pieces gates of bronze and will cut asunder the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.*

***Isaiah 45:2-3***

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”*

***Mark 16:15***

*“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*

***Acts 1:8***

*“But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witness both in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

***Matthew 28:19&20***

The Disciples were given a worldwide vision. Victory Outreach followed our Lord's example of discipling people to the vision.

### **History Highlights of Victory Outreach**

- God Called Pastor Sonny to establish a church for addicts.
- Pastor Sonny began to instill the vision into other men with personal time and patience.
- Sis. Julie also invested in the lives of women, teaching them to follow Christ and allow His transformation in all areas of their lives.
- From humble beginnings, Victory Outreach International grew from one church to a worldwide network of over 500 churches and ministries.

An in-depth presentation of the vision can be found in the ministry's publications:  
Sonny, Treasures out of Darkness, Internalizing The Vision, & Vision for the Outcast.

By Sonny Arguinzoni Sr.

#### A. How do we transmit the Vision to the church?

1. **Expose** the people to the Vision
  - In the preaching and teaching of the church.
  - In the prayers of the church.
  - Display banners and posters.
  - In the writing of the church (newsletters, etc.).
2. The people **participate** in the Vision
  - Active involvement – street meetings, evangelism.
  - Prayer and giving.
  - Discipleships, retreats, and conferences.
3. They identify with the Vision
  - People witness the transforming power of God in their own lives as well as in the lives of others.
  - They are “plugged into” the Pastor's vision.
  - They see it as his vision (the Pastor).
4. They **internalize** the Vision
  - It becomes a part of them.
  - They feel it is their vision.
  - They develop a sense of destiny.

**Note:** The vision of the individual must be submitted to the church vision. You may feel God leading you to promote a sincere and genuine ministry, but it must be in line with the vision of Victory Outreach.

5. They become *transmitters* of the Vision
  - They communicate this vision with other people.
  - They are influenced to spread the vision.
  - They are consumed with the vision and it overflows to others.

**Note:** Be patient with those that do not immediately identify with the vision – it sometimes takes time.

### **III. EVANGELIZING THE WORLD FOR CHRIST – (Acts 1:8)**

#### A. Examples of the Early Church

1. The apostles needed the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task.
2. They had converts every day.
3. They touched the entire known civilized world in only 20 years.
4. They did it without modern means of communication, transportation, and technology.

#### B. What kind of task are we facing today?

1. Approximately 3 billion out of 5 billion people have never heard the Gospel preached to them – not even once.
2. Over 1 million people go into eternity every week around the world without Christ.
3. We are in the era of mega cities; Mexico City has nearly 30 million people. New York has 20 million & Los Angeles has 3 million.

#### C. Creative Evangelistic Ideas for Men in Ministry:

1. Prison Ministry
2. G.A.N.G. Task Force-targeting gang members
3. Car Shows
4. Skits and Drama targeting hurting people
5. Specialized small group outreach

#### D. Evangelism at a Personal Level

1. Learn how to lead someone to Christ
2. Get involved in one-on-one evangelism as well as corporate efforts.
3. Financially support evangelism efforts through local church giving.
4. Support Global Evangelism through consistent United We Can giving.

### **IV. EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS FOR MINISTRY – (Ephesians 4:11-12)**

Meaning: To fit out or furnish as for war, to dress.

#### A. Why do we equip?

1. We value growth and learning through formal, non-formal, and informal training.

2. We desire the equipping process to continue on (you have been equipped, now equip others)

B. How do we equip?

1. One-on-one discipleship
2. Men’s Discipleships
3. Regional Men’s meetings, conference, conventions, retreats
4. VETI/VOBC – Victory Education Training Institute and Victory Outreach Bible College
5. UTC – Urban Training Centers
6. MTC – Mission Training Centers

C. Who do we equip?

1. F.A.T. Men & Women - Faithful, Available and Teachable.
2. Spend quality time with those who have potential.
3. Equip the ministry areas of the church.
  - Worship - excellent worship, musician and vocal training.
  - Christian Education - Giving priority to the “building up of the saints” in all areas.
  - Children’s Ministries - training for teachers and workers in methods, creativity, classroom management, and evangelism.
  - G.A.N.G. Warriors - valuing our responsibility to our future leaders.
4. Special Service Homes – training to run efficient and effective rehabilitation homes; Specific training men’s and women’s home directors.

**V. ESTABLISHING INDIVIDUALS AND THE LOCAL CHURCH TOWARD SPIRITUAL MATURITY – (Ephesians 4:4)**

Meaning: To set up a firm basis; to make valid.

A. Spiritual Maturity in the Life of the Individual Christian Character

Teaching others	rather than...	Just being taught
Commitment	rather than...	Apathy
Holiness	rather than...	Compromise
Seeking Unity	rather than...	Promoting disunity
Desiring Spiritual Challenges	rather than...	Desiring Entertainment
Active Faith	rather than...	Laziness

B. Spiritual Maturity in the Life of the Local Church

1. We must solidify our churches through:
  - Strong prayer ministries that cultivate a praying church
  - Effective Children’s Ministry – reach the next generation now!
  - Strong teaching/preaching in the Word of God.
  - Solid giving in our local churches

## APPENDIX G

### THE THREE C'S

#### **Our Victory Outreach Mission Statement contains all three C's:**

##### **CAUSE:**

Victory Outreach is an International church-oriented Christian ministry called to the task of evangelizing and discipling the hurting people of the world with a message, hope and plan of Jesus Christ.

##### **CORPORATION:**

This call involves a commitment to plant and develop churches, rehabilitation homes, and training centers in strategic cities of the world.

##### **COMMUNITY:**

Victory Outreach inspires and instills within people the desire to fulfill their potential in life with a sense of dignity, belonging, and destiny.

##### **CAUSE:**

Victory Outreach works cooperatively with others of mutual purpose in accomplishing the task before us.

#### **I. CAUSE – ARMY (Isaiah 45:2-3)**

##### **A. Our Mission:**

1. To evangelize the inner cities of a hurting world.
2. To make disciples and disciple makers.

##### **B. Our Core Values:**

1. Obedience
2. Commitment
3. Loyalty

##### **C. Our Purpose:**

1. VOI Mission Statement
2. VOI Statement of Purpose (MMOP)

#### **Victory Outreach International Mission Statement**

Victory Outreach is an International church-oriented Christian ministry called to the task of evangelizing and discipling the hurting people of the world with a message, hope and plan of Jesus Christ.

This call involves a commitment to plant and develop churches, rehabilitation homes, and training centers in strategic cities of the world.

Victory Outreach inspires and instills within people the desire to fulfill their potential in life with a sense of dignity, belonging, and destiny. Victory Outreach works cooperatively with others of mutual purpose in accomplishing the task before us.



**Statement of Purpose**  
**Mobilizing Men and Women of Purpose**

Mobilizing men and women for the purpose of character formation, focused for their future,  
and fulfilling the mission of Victory Outreach International

Our Cause defines our focus and direction.  
It answers these questions, “What is our purpose and where are we headed?”

Our unique, God-given anointing to reach the lost of the inner cities of the world for  
Christ has identified our harvest group for evangelism and the methods we use to reach  
that harvest.

**II. CORPORATION – BUSINESS (ISAIAH 54:2)**

- A. Goals for the local church:
  - 1. Financial stability for the church
    - a. Operating the ministry with a budget.
    - b. Establish a positive testimony with local community creditors
    - c. Church-owned facilities.
  - 2. Personal Financial Stability of Members
    - a. Faithful Tithers
    - b. United We Can Covenant Partners
- B. Business aspect of ministry:
  - 1. Conduct the affairs of the church according to standard business practices.
  - 2. Keep accurate administrative & church records.
  - 3. Adhere to all corporate procedures and policies.
- C. Quality representation of local church image:
  - 1. Facilities
  - 2. Literature
  - 3. Programs
  - 4. Church Ministries

Without the value of Corporation, Victory Outreach Ministries International  
would not be able to reach its full potential.

Our commitment to financial integrity, effective administration, and continued quality  
advancement helps establish us as a ministry with a long and dynamic future.

### III. COMMUNITY – FAMILY (ACTS 2:44)

- A. Church family relationships are valued:
  - 1. Brothers, Sisters in Christ
  - 2. Spiritual parents, pastor, mentor, leader
  
- B. Church family needs are met:
  - 1. Support is given during times of crisis.
  - 2. The Local Church should promote a Family Environment
    - a. Fellowship i.e. Potlucks, Parties, Picnics
    - b. Meeting Special Needs: Prison Ministry, Twilight Treasures, Diamonds of Destiny, Women’s Homes, Single Mothers, Hospitalized, Elderly, Poor, etc.
  
- C. A church family has no racial barriers:
  - 1. Acceptance of all cultures and languages is valued.
  - 2. Multicultural evangelism and church planting is taught and modeled.
  
- D. A church family values restoration:
  - 1. Those who have been hurt and injured by life, circumstances, and ministry.
  - 2. Those who have experienced spiritual and moral failure.

Community is the adhesive that holds our ministry together. It is a secure place where we communicate with one another and receive love, acceptance and security

#### Suggested reinforcement activity:

With a partner discuss what happens when you lack one of these areas.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>NO Community =</b>   | People don’t care about each other<br>People are cold & unloving  |
| <b>NO Cause =</b>       | No Momentum<br>No Excitement<br>No Victories are won<br>No sense of overcoming challenges   |
| <b>NO Corporation =</b> | Lack of resources, money, buildings, critical leadership, etc...<br>Church has no energy & compassion, but is often chaotic<br>Lack of family value |

**We need all three to give us a balance in ministry.**

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