



by Dan Schaffer

Working With God or For God

I am sitting in an airplane returning from Germany. It has come home to me again. Many of us struggle with how to relate to God. We feel obligated to God, and therefore, are driven to either prove our value or try to be good enough so that God will love us. We want and need to prove that we are valuable enough that the God of the universe would come to earth and die for us.

Many of us are searching for the formula, the list of required services or obligations so that if we do them, God will be obligated to give us what we want. There are the two faces of obligation! We are caught in the trap of trying to be good enough that God should love us or we are trying to manipulate God into giving us what we desire. We see a life free of pain, a life where we are in control. One face of obligation leads to isolation from God and the other leads to bitterness towards God.

We struggle wanting to know God in an intimate and real relationship yet we are not sure how to get there. We see that Paul's message in Philippians 3:10 is telling us that the Christian life is all about knowing Christ, but we are trying to know him through working for him.

Years ago when I was just beginning to understand this dilemma, as I was trying to clarify the difference between obligation and opportunity, I developed the following slide:

We have the choice between:

Freedom – Opportunity – Obedience

OR

Slavery – Obligation – Legalism

This stimulated intense discussion in the ministry training team that I was a part of. I felt that obedience was an opportunity to know God and join God

in the very act of creating spiritual life. Harvey, a pastor, felt that obedience was not an opportunity but in fact an obligation. This led to some heated and intense discussion and the difference remained unresolved when Harvey retired from the team.

About 3 years later I receive a letter from Harvey and it opened with this statement, "In the last year my 'joy' has doubled, no it has tripled, since I learned the difference between working for God and working with God." He went on to tell me that as he had been studying some of the giants of the faith, he began to see that it was clear that they understood the difference between living

in obligation and living in opportunity. Harvey had nailed the distinction in a very practical way.

When we work for God we are living in obligation and the responsibility weighs us down and steals our joy. But when we choose to grasp the opportunity to pursue God through obedience the burden is light and we experience incredible joy. Why is this so difficult for many of us? Have you found yourself in this conflict?

Most Christians desire to know Christ in that life changing pattern of Philippians 3:10. But few of us are able to experience the fullness of the saving power of Christ's resurrection, the sanctifying power of sharing in his suffering and the transforming power of knowing him intimately.

Today will you join in this quest to know Christ with a few other hungry men? Will you experience the truth of the gospel in the relational environment with the encouragement of a group of like-minded men? Will you start the process of having a dialog by asking the right questions, questions that only God can answer? Will you move the dialog to a dialog with the living God? It is this dialog with God that is the process and power that transforms us into the likeness of Christ.

“We struggle wanting to know God in an intimate and real relationship yet we are not sure how to get there.”

Ministry Update

▶ God is working in the Wesley Men of the United Methodist Churches in Virginia

Our **Second Generation** is off to a booming start! Here are the stats:

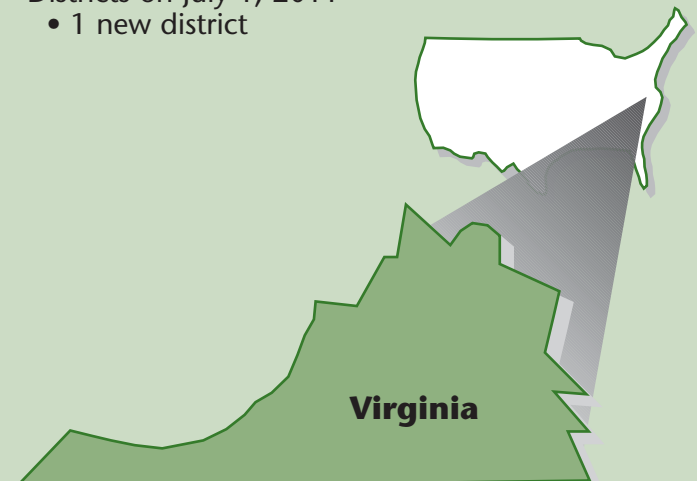
82 Men Total

- 79 Laity
- 3 Clergy

14 Churches

- 9 churches continued from the First Generation
- 5 new churches
- When asked the question, "Does, or will, your Pastor participate with your leadership group?" – all but 3 said "Yes!"

8 Districts of 18 Districts (to be reduced to 16 Districts on July 1, 2011)
• 1 new district



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Ministry Update

► Trip to Good Shepherd Church (Kigali, Rwanda, Africa)

My wife and I arrived at Kigali Rwanda on March 12 after 30 hours of travel and... (2) 9 hour flights! In addition to visiting the Good Shepherd Primary School, I was going to meet with the leaders of the Good Shepherd Church. 6 of the key leaders of the Church have been in the Four Phase Process for 14 months and Dan and I have been mentoring them through the Process every 4-6 weeks via Skype. Now they were trying (struggling) to complete Phase III.

As we discussed Phase III, it became clear that some cultural and "typical" struggles were limiting the teams' ability to successfully get through Phase III. I could see immediately something was prohibiting them from experiencing deeper unity and trust necessary to get through Phase III! The issue was "Servant Leadership!" This concept is presented and facilitated in Phase II, but is tested in Phase III.

For 2 weeks we openly discussed and discovered the barriers restricting the men and also tried to operate in the Christ model of Servant Leadership. After much prayer, the men realized they are called to "serve" the Mission of the Church, the members of the Church, their families and community... and each other... as Christ did and commands us to do. They decided that they must become Servant Leaders or they will not move forward as a leadership team or create a lasting legacy in The Kingdom!

(Left-Right)
Simon,
Bonaventure,
Rongin, and
Christopher



(Matt 20:25-28) Jesus said... "You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you... but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."

This change from "King Leadership" to "Servant Leadership" is not easy (anywhere) and particularly in cultures where authoritative or "Chief-ten" leadership has been modeled for years! Only God can lead men through this transformation and I am encouraged these seem committed to journey through the battle.

Please pray for these leaders of The Good Shepherd Church as they sincerely wrestle with God and seek to be transformed by Him... into Servant Leaders.

Dick Hanson

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