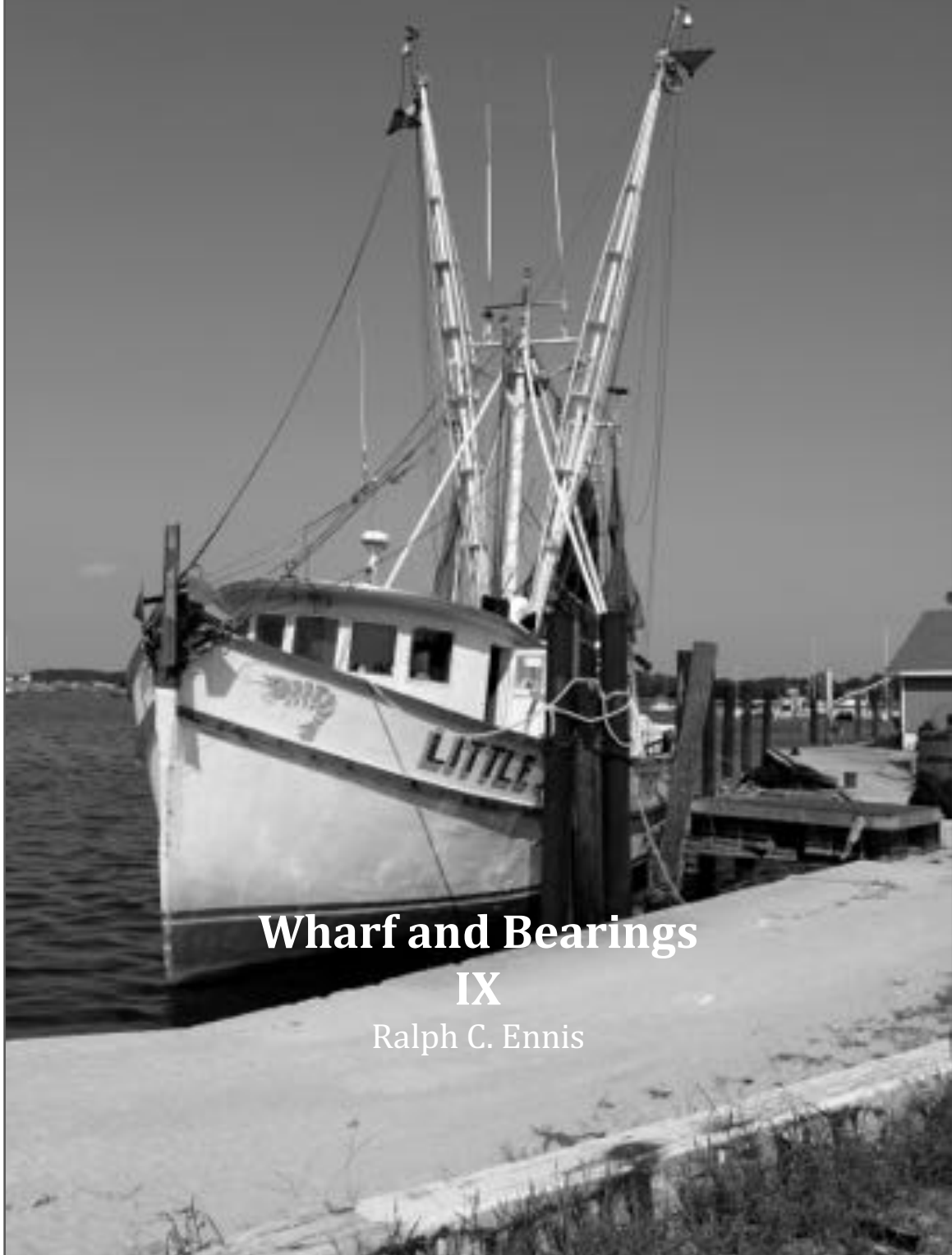


# Essays on Gospel Implications



## Wharf and Bearings

### IX

Ralph C. Ennis

# **Wharf and Bearings IX**

*Essays on  
Gospel Implications*

Ralph C. Ennis

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## *Gospel Implications*

### Table of Contents

Introduction to WB Series .....	4
What’s Missing in the American Gospel? .....	6
Questions to Do Life Differently.....	10
Relational Habits for True Friendship with God and Others .....	12
Four I’s of Leading and Influencing.....	15
Teaching Ethics in the Public Square.....	19
Pray! Listen, Discern and Act Ambitiously.....	20
My Gifts, Calling and Orientation in the Kingdom of God .....	21
An Introduction to Long Range Planning with Discernment.....	23
Resources to Explore .....	34
About the Authors.....	35

## Introduction to WB Series

As land dwelling beings, when we are at sea, two thoughts are always in mind—even if in the back of our minds. Where’s the wharf—a safe place to dock? What’s my bearing—which direction am I going and will it in time get me to a safe wharf?

We all need safe places. Fundamentally, life is filled with uncertainties. Sometimes we feel in control or at minimal risk of danger, but that is always only temporary. Our common human experience inevitably involves risks of the unknown. And through death, not to be feared, we journey to an eternal wharf in Jesus.

We all need a bearing that will get us where we want to go while preserving the ability to plot a course to a safe place. We can play far from this wharf, but we desire home.

Wharf and Bearings Series, a collection of essays, poems and a short story, is intended to present a journey—my journey. I share it with the hope that it will give some guidance as you seek your bearings and wharf throughout your life.

At no time are these essays to be considered exhaustive, they are pathways I have taken to find wharf and bearings for me. And collectively, they represent “philosophical peace” for me.



I dedicate this series to my wife of 40 years (in 2013), our four children and their spouses and our 13+ grandchildren and the generations to follow! Here's an overview of the series:

**Wharf and Bearings ONE:**  
*Hope and Beholding the Triune God*

**Wharf and Bearings TWO:**  
*Spirituality and the Triune God*

**Wharf and Bearings THREE:**  
*Knowing, Beauty, Ethics and Reality*

**Wharf and Bearings FOUR:**  
*Love, Longings, Success and Consequences*

**Wharf and Bearings FIVE:**  
*Poems from the Soul*

**Wharf and Bearing SIX:**  
*Oneness in Marriage*

**Wharf and Bearings SEVEN:**  
*The Mind, Decisions and Artificial Intelligence*

**Wharf and Bearing EIGHT:**  
*World View and Culture*

**Wharf and Bearing NINE:**  
*Gospel Implications*

**Wharf and Bearing TEN:**  
*Our Times and Futures*

*"... we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power,  
and the wonders He has done ..."  
Psalm 78:4 -6*

## What's Missing in the American Gospel?

In American business jargon, a business must define, develop, maintain, and use its core competence to fulfill its long-term mission and vision as it meets its short-term goals. I believe I have a core competency. Others have it as well. I listen. I observe. I ask a basic question, "What are the foundational issues involved here? And what's missing?" Some people think I do this well. Others are dubious. You decide.

I make a point of visiting Amazon.com. What are people writing about these days from a Christian perspective and from other perspectives? What's coming into the American culture? And what's missing?

I would like to propose that certain essential issues are missing on the landscape of American Christianity. If not addressed, I propose that the long-term consequences of neglect will shipwreck the mission and vision of the American church. The foundation of the church is obviously Jesus. It is His church. And it is His good news that the church is called to embrace, live and proclaim.

The good news proclaimed by today's church—is it flawed? One could easily propose that the core flaw of the American church is the disparity between preaching and living the gospel. Do we live what we preach? This mark of hypocrisy is an obvious mark against the church in all ages. But it is not only this flaw that jeopardizes the church today. In addition it is the holes in the American gospel message that concerns me.

One could quickly retort, "But all good believers know the essentials of the gospel!" In one sense that is true. We know the gospel of grace and forgiveness of sins, of a God of love, of Jesus Who died, was buried, rose again and ascended into heaven, of the Holy Spirit and His baptism and gifts. What possibly could be missing?

Let me propose eight aspects of the gospel that the American church needs to reconsider: 1) the jealousy of God, 2) the holiness of God, 3) the authority of God, 4) the mercy of God, 5) the glorious "everywhereness" of God, 6) the shame of being human, 7) the power of powerlessness, and 8) the offer of God's covenant.

When was the last time you heard a message or read a book on the **jealousy of God**? Did you know that the reason the first two commandments of the Law of Moses were given is because "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:4). Most Americans since the 1960's consider jealousy to be a bad emotion. What would Satan benefit if the American church forgot the jealousy of God or if believers considered jealousy a bad characteristic? How can people like God if they consider the basis of His first two commandments to be a bad emotion?

When was the last time you read a book or heard a message on the **shame of being human**? Shame has such a negative undercurrent to it—why would one want to hear a message on the bad news of shame? That's the whole point. The good news of Jesus is always in contrast to the bad news of sins and sin nature. We often hear about guilt, the bad news about sinning. But the really bad news that people are deeply flawed, corrupt and undeserving of love is not what you want to wake up to in the morning. There are over 450 books on shame. Most tell us shame is a bad thing that we need to get rid of. At least one tells us that the animal world shows signs of experiencing all human

emotions expect one—shame. Why did God give us this profound emotion—to torment us or to draw us to Himself? Have we settled into the shamelessness of our culture? Have we lost sensitivity and embraced sensuality (Ephesians 4: 19 NIV)?

This really bad news wrapped in shame only precedes the really good news. That really good news is the **mercy** of God. Heard of any good books on God's grace lately? There are some good ones out there. Read any books on God's mercy? Those are precious few. When God designed the tabernacle of the descendants of Abraham, why do you think He chose to place the Ark of the Covenant (which held the commandments based on His jealousy) on the mercy seat? What is the difference between grace and mercy? Can you receive mercy when you are not under a sentence of judgment? No. Can you receive grace when not under judgment? Sure. We all need mercy to stand before God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

Is God and His **glory** really **everywhere** in the American gospel? Maybe in lip service. Is God present in sexual passion? Is God present in food, sleep, work, clothes, children, hands, and beauty? If so what's He doing there? Is He mute or simply speaking silently. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). Does the silent language of God speak to English speaking American Christians. What have we heard lately from the God Who is everywhere? What aspect of the glory of God has captured your heart through such speech. Has the American church been taught to listen to the God Who is everywhere or only to the God Who speaks through the Bible?

The same Psalm that draws us to God's "everywhere language" calls us to listen to His written word. "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." It must be noted that the language of the perfect law of the Lord is set in the context of the language of the silent speech of God from His everywhere presence. Has the American church lost the ability to hear the message of Jesus because we have failed to know that the glory of God is speaking everywhere? Without the glory of God everywhere is not life fragmented and the good news of Jesus relevant someplace but not everywhere?

There are books out there on the **holiness** of God. Holiness has not been lost from the Gospel message. But do we like that God is holy? Does not His justice spring from His holiness? Judgment is not something the American church is well prepared to address. It is prepared to address the reality that God is love. We tell many stories of His love. And they are true. But do we tell many stories of His justice springing from His holiness? Why? Can we resolve the seeming schizophrenic nature of God—He is loving one day and judgmental the next. Does not the jealousy of God resolve that schizophrenia?

When was the last time you heard a message on the **covenants** of God? Maybe last week depending on what church you are in. And maybe never. What is a covenant? What is a contractual agreement? What is the difference? Why didn't God establish contractual agreements with His people? Why can't we talk about covenants without getting into a debate about dispensational and covenantal theology? Why does Hebrews 8 call us to consider the first and the second covenant?

Have you read a book recently on **authority** or on leadership? Did it encourage people to honor authority? The authority of church leaders is under fire because of the abuses of authority—from sexual abuses to money abuses. But has the American church considered the alternative in a fallen world. What would the planet look like without systems of authority? Is authority a bad word? Does not all authority originate from God? Why in the end times are people accused of despising

authority? “This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beast, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beast they too will perish” (2 Peter 2:10-12).

The **power of powerlessness** is a message that sometimes gets through on Sunday mornings in American—and gets lost by the time we pass the offering plate or fundraise for a building or missions project. As Americans are we addicted to power? We want more power in our cars and we get it. We want more power in our workplace and we get it. Power, like happiness, seems to be an inalienable right for Americans. Or is power what makes us happy? But Jesus spoke of sacrifice, of self-denial, of taking up a cross, of the humility of powerlessness, and living in the power of powerlessness. He modeled this life on the cross. “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15).

The focal point of the Jewish nation was the tabernacle. The focal point of the tabernacle was holy of holies. In the **holy** of holies was the **mercy** seat. On the mercy seat sat the Ark of the **Covenant** that contained the **authoritative** law that proclaimed for the first time in Scripture that God is **jealous**. The **shame** of human indignity separated them from the holy presence of God as physically represented by the veil (that was rent when Jesus died.) And the **glory** of God filled (was everywhere in) the holy of holies. Every year a lamb was slain and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. From the **powerlessness** of slain blood came the power to wash away sin. In referring to the priest of the tabernacle, the writer of Hebrews states, “They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven” (Hebrews 8:5). Holiness, authority, mercy, jealousy, power of powerlessness, covenant, and glory everywhere resided as symbols in the tabernacle. God focused His people on these themes. He didn’t place the tabernacle on the outside perimeter of the nation. Rather He strategically placed it in the center of the nation with the twelve tribes surrounding it. God wants us focused on what is in heaven. And He placed a copy on earth to help focus us there!

In the face of a market economy, has the American church dumbed down the gospel? Is not the root of capitalism the envy (a perverted **jealousy**) of money? Does the market economy care if you pursue **holiness** for the good of your soul or just acquire material wealth for your pleasure? Does not capitalistic economics play on human **shame** to “Be like the Jones or else suffer the shame (humiliation) of being less than the Jones” in order to enslave human souls to the **mercy** of money? Are not many relational decisions based on contractual agreements with little regard for **covenantal** foundations? Is not the economy **everywhere** – as in “It’s the economy stupid!” Is not the economy the **authority** on life! And what of **power of powerlessness**? In the market economy it is the power of the buck. Let’s get more bang for the buck! Powerlessness simply has no power.

Again I ask has the American church dumbed down the gospel in order to accommodate the realities of the market economy?

Some may say: Lighten up! Isn’t all this based on the Old Testament tabernacle? Jesus didn’t affirm these things. Or did He? First of all Jesus did affirm the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27). He also addressed themes of mercy (Luke 10:25-37), holiness (Luke 11:37-53), shame (Luke 7:36-50), covenant (Luke 22:20), jealousy (Luke 19:45,46), everywhere glory (Luke 9:26) and authority (Luke 20:1-8).



Jesus also spoke regarding the dangers of an economic world view. “No servant 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. You cannot serve both God and Money.” The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight” (Luke 16:13-15).

So again I ask, has the American church dumbed down the really good news of Jesus in order to accommodate the realities of the market economy?

What difference would it make if the American church worshipped God Who is **jealous** for them? What if God is both holy and loving and yet not schizophrenic? Would we then like Him? What difference would it make if the American church faced their **shame** and forsook the self-righteous claim of deserving God’s love? What difference would it make if the American church received God’s **mercy** that overcomes judgment and reached out to the world from a position of mercy rather than economic superiority or prior blessing of God? What difference would it make if the American church submitted to the **authority** of God and honored other authorities in the global community? What difference would it make if the American church understood that God has made a **covenant** with believers and not a contract? Would we be so quick to break covenants with Him or in our marriages? What difference would it make if the American church saw the beauty and **glory of God everywhere**? Would we understand the Scriptures in a different light? Would our lives be filled with meanings from the birds, the sunshine, the joys of marital pleasures, and the wink of a baby?

May the preacher, the evangelists, prophets, apostles, and teachers of the American church reconsider the gospel we bring. Much is at stake!

*May 1, 2002*

# Questions to Do Life Differently

As followers of Jesus, we are called to do life differently from the ways of the world. We must address *strategic problems* by asking *pertinent questions* in order to go forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And we must embrace our place as living as aliens—as citizens of the kingdom of God. This world is not our home base. We live as exiles with courage and perseverance. And as we live in this world, we are called to bless our foreign homelands. Below is an attempt to identify the strategic problems of our day and the pertinent questions that believers must address by their words and actions. These are offered not as a complete, definitive set of issues but rather as a suggested way forward into doing life differently in our day and time—and for the glory of God.

## **Strategic Problems**

***The problem of being fully human.*** So much has change for humankind since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wars, nuclear realities, information overload, supercomputers, bio-engineering—all serve to disorient our sense of who we are and what it means to develop as human beings over a lifetime. So what does it mean to be fully human?

***The problem of sustainability.*** Today we have a significant problem of sustainability unlike any in human history. Previous civilizations have dealt with how to sustain their existence. We deal with how to sustain our planet. What will it take for us to preserve this planet as a livable ecosystem for humans and the diverse plants and animals on our lands and in our oceans and atmosphere?

## **Pertinent Questions**

### ***Problem of Being Fully Human***

1. Do we have the right attachments? Do we have a simple devotion to God above all else? Are we distracted from God or attracted to idols of humanism, materialism or something else?
2. Can we define satisfaction? When is enough truly sufficient in our hearts? Do we act as stewards of what has been entrusted to us or are we deceived into believing and acting as owners?
3. Do we see reality somewhat accurately? Do we have right perspectives on life—though dimly? Do we search the Scriptures regularly to understand ways of seeing life through the lens that God has provided? Do we believe our intelligence can be maximized artificially? Will that be beneficial to humanity?
4. Do we view time and space in a way that we see the Triune God as both personal and infinite? If we don't, are we making God into our own image for our convenience?
5. Do we differentiate (assign identity) in appropriate ways? Since marketing strategies focus on differentiating products, are we hyper-categorizing at the expense of the common good? Do we see people primarily as those in the image of God or has the many layers of family,

ethnic, racial, national and other identities blinded our eyes from their true value? How can we be global citizens while our first allegiance is as citizens of the Kingdom of God?

6. Do we engage with the mega-question of beauty and ugliness? Does beauty drive our souls more than materialism? Are we averse to ugliness or does it strangely attract us? Do we have an ethical beauty-ugliness continuum that is applicable across cultures and generations? Are we soul beautiful—to us, to others, to God? Do we relish in the beauty of God's holiness?
7. Do we find integration in the midst of complexity? Can we make some sense of this complex world and universe? How does biodiversity impact our decisions? Is the Triune God enough to integrate life? Have we integrated the complexities of sexuality in today's world through the meanings of God's jealousy love?

### ***Problem of Sustainability***

8. Are we engaging properly with the ecosystem? Do we engage with love and long-term viability or are we addicted to the struggle for power and efficiency?
9. Do we negotiate good and evil from a perspective of merciful justice? Can we find the good that God intended when others do evil things to us? Can we find a meta-language for goodness across cultures and generations? Do we bring moral capital into our sphere of influence? Can we sustain systems of human authority with moral goodness based in the goodness of God?
10. Do we use power to build or destroy or destroy to build new families, societies, churches, nations, ecosystems, etc.? Do we use powerlessness to worship with humility or to blame? Since powerlessness mirrors the ways of the cross, are we becoming like Christ through sufferings? Do we seek to sustain human life through a proper tension of managing power and powerlessness?

### **Conclusion**

Will addressing these pertinent questions substantially solve the two strategic problems? What is missing as we seek to do life differently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond?

*Written July 2013*

# Relational Habits for True Friendship with God and Others

In a world glutted with information, the skills for simple friendship seem to be slipping. More people have more shallow relationships, and fewer have true friendships that weather the test that come within those relationships. [This seems often true among Christian leaders.]

In this essay I have attempted to highlight some of the relational habits necessary for true friendships with others and with God.

## ***Awareness, Attentiveness and Empathy***

It may seem too elementary to talk about awareness and attentiveness in relationships. And yet these basic relational habit form a pathway into healthy relationships. If we are unaware of others and/or inattentive to what is happening with them and within us in relation to them, then healthy relationships are very difficult to form and grow to maturity.

In our relationship with God, we are to be aware of His presence everywhere. He does not leave His people or His creation alone. He is the “involved” Creator. Our relationship with Him is predicated on our awareness of His presence.

In addition, we should be self-aware of the longings of our souls: What is the state of my soul? This question of self-awareness provided a pathway for us to authentically meet with God and with others. Unless we attempt to be self-aware, we will simply bring hidden agendas into our relationship and use various forms of manipulation to get what we long for.

However, self-awareness without an attentiveness to God (His presence, plans and purposes) and to others’ needs and agendas will produce an self-serving relationship. We should be aware and attentive to others for mutuality in relationships to truly occur.

This attentiveness is empathetic. We perceive others’ agendas and acknowledge their perspectives and desires as valuable contributors to our relationship. Empathy is an ability that is decreasing in our culture. Studies among college students indicate a significant reduction in empathy over the past decade. To be empathetic requires us to do the work of perceiving others’ emotions from their point of view—not ours. From this awareness, we act in a manner that dignifies them—even if we oppose their position.

## ***Openness and Dialogue***

The essence of understanding between persons is dialogue with openness. If we are closed to one another, the passing of words between people or with God is of little use. Cynicism, distrust, hyper-criticism, contempt, envy, anger, unforgiveness—these are the things that close our hearts to others.

With kindness, forbearance, gentleness, respect, humility, authentic truth, love and mutual submission to each other’s strengths, we can dialogue with others with open hearts. This dialogue is a two way street. And the skill of listening is often the more difficult skill to perfect. We listen with our ears, hearts and minds—and with our bodies. Our non-verbal responses to the words of others create a “listening” posture that screams: “I’m tuned in to you as a person created in the image of

God” or “I could care less.” Thus, empathic dialogue can continue and knowing between persons can deepen.

God wants us to pray—to talk to Him about our cares, our joys, our partnership with Him and others, our thanks, our praise. And He wants us to listen to Him in prayer. The Holy Spirit can prompt our hearts with words or a deep sense of His presence. Learning to listen to the Spirit requires an openness and submission to His agenda before He reveals it. Always His agenda includes being with us in the midst of life—even when we do not feel His presence.

### ***Purpose, Meaning and Engagements***

We all want to be useful. As the Apostle Paul indicated his desire for “fruitful labor” (see Philippians 1:22 ESV), we too want our labors to bear fruit. We are created to do good work—to create, modify and/or produce from the abilities and gifts God has given us for His glory and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, the engagements of work require some sense of purpose and meaning. Without an answer to the question “Why,” people can feel meaningless and become despondent. Our meaning in life is intrinsically wrapped in the reality that all we do has eternal consequences in the redemptive purposes of God.

God has purposes and plans for the redemption of creation. And He invites us into His redemptive agenda. We can partner with God and others to build and protect families, organizations, and societies. We can share with the goodness and the message of the Gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom. And God will empower us in this journey for His glory—not for ours.

### ***Remember and Re-Interpret***

Our histories impact our present relationships. Some facts of history are indisputable. However, the act of interpreting and re-interpreting history provides a way forward through that history.

Joseph learned this relational habit with his brothers. By betraying him into slavery, they meant this for evil; but God meant it for good to save many people (Genesis 50:20). By re-interpreting Joseph’s personal history through the redemptive agenda of God, Joseph was able to extend mercy to his brothers.

### ***Dreams and Imaginations***

Part of the human experience is to dream and imagine into the future that which is not reality in the present or past. We need to see and foster the potential in each other and help bring into reality the blessedness of our gifting from God. We need to walk by faith in God and with others into the futures He is calling us to for His Kingdom.

If we cease to dream—to see reality constructed differently—or imagine new ways of doing life, we become stagnant and locked to a present that is moving forward into the glorious Kingdom of God. However, dreaming and imagining can be very detrimental to the Christian life. If we dream and imagine in order to satisfy our lust and greed, we reduce the possibility of life to a life of rebellion toward God—one which He will resist as He seeks to redeem.

### ***Mercy and Forgiveness***

We all without exception continue to sin—to rebel against the One Who has made us and desires us. We all need mercy that absolves us from condemnation and execution of judgment. We need forgiveness from our sins including our offenses against the dignity of other humans.

As we receive forgiveness and mercy from God and as we offer and receive forgiveness and mercy each other, we experience a freedom in relationship that allows us direct access to each other's true hearts.

However, in a fallen world, we are often left with the responsibility and opportunity to show forbearance. We continue to do that which we desire not—we continue to sin. As we forbear each other, we enter into the heart of God Who shows forbearance to humanity since the days of Adam and Eve.

### ***Playing and Delighting***

Part of life is play. God originally place our first parents in a garden. We often play and delight in garden environments. We delight in beauty. We play in spaces of safety. This includes sexual play and delighting. The Garden of Eden, no doubt, had it all!

We need to enter into what delights the heart of God. And we need to learn the art of play as adults within the proper boundaries of jealous love among us—including sexual boundaries.

### ***Appreciating Mystery***

Boredom kills relationship. As humans, we askew boredom. But why? Boredom occurs within the loneliness of thoughts. And if our thoughts have no extension into new awareness, we can seem rather dull to ourselves.

The joy of appreciating mystery should never be underestimated. God is mysterious. The Infinite is embedded within the finite and yet apart from time and space. And our life in Christ is a life of mystery. The jealous love of God is a mystery that offers mercy instead of judgment. Mysteries are everywhere!

As humans created in the image of God, we can rest assured that all people are mysterious. They should never bore us. The interplay of power and authority within marriages and among societies is a mystery to behold and explore. We should seek to behold the mystery of God in others, in society, in nature—and in our own souls.

### ***Last Thoughts***

The above description of relational habits can be expanded, but these few habits are put forth as a way forward into true friendships in a world that often encourages us to live lonely lives alienated from God and others. We are relational beings. God offers us friendship. He puts people in our lives for the formation of relationships. These relational habits can help guide us into a rich life of intimate relationship where souls meet and flourish.

*Written July 2013*

# Four I's of Leading and Influencing

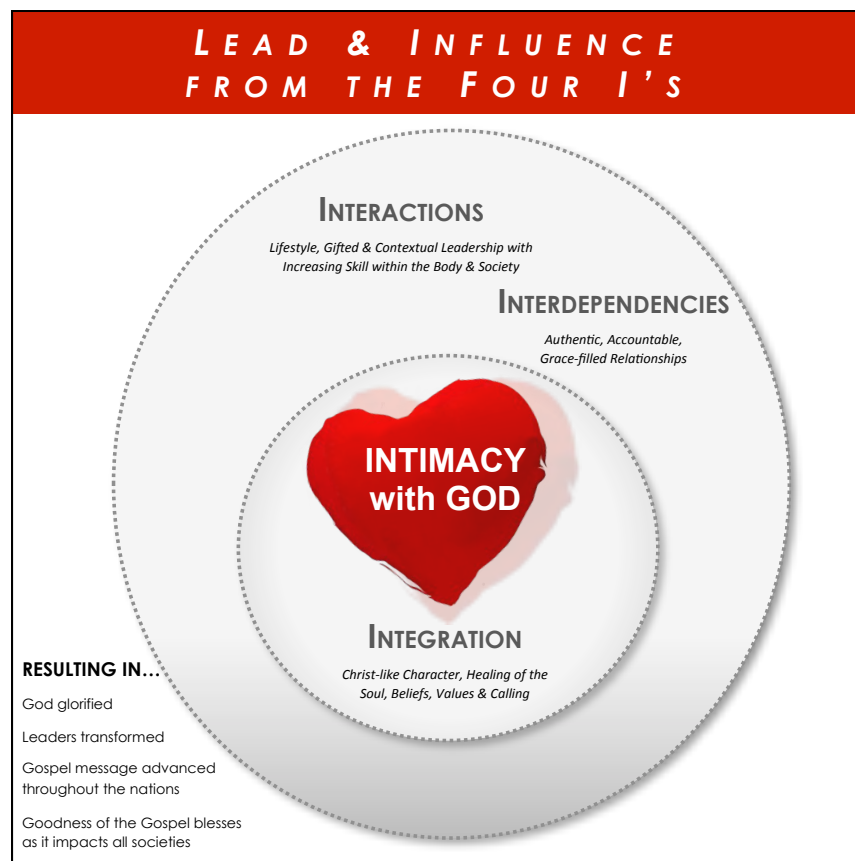
Ralph Ennis and Dennis Stokes

## LEADERS AND INFLUENCERS

The privilege and responsibility of leadership allows leaders to effect the direction of people, organizations, nations and cultures. This privilege may come with or without an official organizational position. Some aspire to lead. They often have a position in an organization that requires them to give guidance, make decisions, and problem solve in real time.

Others influence without an organizational position—they just cannot NOT lead. Their contribution influences others to consider their lives, their values and beliefs. They lead through influence rather than from a position of recognized leadership.

In either case, leaders and influencers must recognize that ultimately what is inside will come out of them. Attention to the inside is a must in the long run. Some leaders neglect this to their peril and to the peril of those they lead. We hope to encourage people to lead and influence from the perspective of Four I's: Intimacy, Integration, Interdependencies, and Interactions.



## **INTIMACY**

The foundational step to leading as a godly Christian is a deep and abiding relationship with the Triune God of the Universe. We can bear no true life apart from Him. We must be grounded in Him—to be His.

Intimacy is a word that best describes this relationship. God has given us permission to call Him “Father.” Jesus calls us “friends.” We are the “bride of Christ.” All these words point toward the fact that the King of Kings wants a deeply intimate relationship with us. We are made for such a relationship.

This intimacy is encouraged in the Biblical command to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:38). The Jealous Lover of our souls wants, but does not demand, our whole being. And as Creator, He deserves all of who we are for His glory.

## **INTEGRATION**

As fallen beings we need to be remade into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). We need His heart of love, His view of reality, His commitment to the Father, His understanding of work and suffering, etc. This integration of being is truly liberating from the self in bondage to sin.

The journey of having an integrated, redeemed self is foreign to today’s pathways for self-actualization. From our culture’s viewpoint, all we need is to be “all we can be.” From a Biblically point of view that just isn’t enough to become what God intended for us to become. We need to be re-born, healed, transformed, and ultimately glorified—to become fully human and in the image of Christ.

As leaders we need to lead out of who we are becoming—not just lead from an organizational position or with a view of authority that demands one’s way. This integration is a life-long process as we experience God’s presence and power 24/7.

## **INTERDEPENDENCIES**

Kingdom mindedness includes developing interdependencies. We are not lone wolves. We are part of the Body of Christ. We need each other to cover for our weakness and to share in our strengths.

The American experience of leadership often implies an individualism that is simply not the ways of Jesus. We are dependent beings by nature and the humility required to embrace that reality throughout our lifetime is refreshing to many.

Moses, sometimes lifted up as the example of an independent leader, was also proclaimed as the most humble person of his generation (Numbers 12:3). He knew his place, his role, his nature, his need to do what God had called him to do alone and what God wanted him to do with others.

Interdependency and humility go together. And independence and pride do as well. Godly Christian leaders proactively seek to embrace humility and learn the necessity of interdependency without becoming pleasers of people before being pleaser of God.



## **INTERACTIONS**

God's purposes drive our interactions. We seek to lead people into the heart of God because God has reached out in love toward us. God is missional and His love drives our interactions in all we do.

We are commissioned to "make disciples of all nations." This mission is far reaching and broader than speaking words of salvation. It implies learning to live and help others live a life truly dedicated to the Triune God in all His ways and purposes.

And His mission for us includes His first mandates in Genesis 1 regarding nature and culture. Jesus affirmed these mandates by becoming a carpenter and living within a community. All our interactions in this life can bring glory to God—societal work is no less meaningful to an integrated leader.

In short, we are to bring the goodness and the message of the gospel everywhere we are and go. And we are to do so in the ways of Jesus: love, humility and sacrifice.

### **An Inward Outward Journey**

Being a disciple, servant and friend of Jesus is a life-long journey. This journey is an inward outward journey.

We are to go inward—into the glory and the heart of the Triune God. We are to go outward—bringing the goodness and the message of the Gospel of Jesus across cultural and generational differences and into the nations. Thus we will do the will of God to fulfill His purposes by His grace and power. In the goings, we explore the glory and heart of God if we have eyes to see and hearts to receive.

Jesus said His food was to do the will of the Father. And He told us that He is the bread of life. Our inward journey is food for the soul. Our outward journey is food for the soul. Together these paths fold into one lifetime journey of following Jesus.

If we are to learn to lead as godly Christian leaders, we must learn the rhythms of an inward outward journey. These rhythms can look different for different people and at different times in our lives.

A key question in this dynamic balance is "How's my soul doing today?" For most of us this question may deteriorate to a lesser examination "Am I happy today?" One can seem happy but still in profound need of soul adjustments.

Another way of asking the soul question would be: *"So where is my soul today regarding the inward outward journey that is food for my soul? How am I moving deeper into the glory and heart of the Triune God this day, this year? How am I bringing the goodness and the message of the Gospel to others in my sphere of influence this day? Am I somewhat balanced in this journey that continuously weaves inward and outward? Any course adjustments needed today—or just the courage to go forward?"*

As we embrace this inward outward journey, we offer to others a leadership and influence that is often rare in this world. It is wrapped in humility. It is focused on the Lord God. It is set to bring goodness to all aspects of life. It offers hope to many who need leaders to lead us into the heart of the Triune God and His good news for humanity.

*Written in 2012*

## Teaching Ethics in the Public Square: A Case in Point

In the public square the thought of teaching ethics is passé. Market dynamics and governmental controls are the forces that must be held in tension if we are to listen to the underlying assumptions of the most current social debate. However, if we consider the impact of white collar crime and old fashion greed, we should consider reintroducing into all levels of our society a three tiered balance of powers: ethical education, markets and government.

Yet who can tell anyone these days what's right and wrong? (Fortunately we can still distinguish the legal and illegal.) This vacuum of authority is setting us free to do whatever we want to do. And that usually leads back to entitlement and greed—"I deserve to have and be whatever I want now!"

Listen to our advertisers and culture makers. Is not this their core message? This new tolerance of greed must be addressed in the public square if we are to have a prosperous society. A truly prosperous society must first be a good society—one that curtails its inherent greed and whose citizens seek the good of each other.

The question now is have we as a society crossed a tipping point in which teaching ethics at all levels (education, business, media, entertainment, government) is beyond our grasp? If so, can the powers of government and markets sustain our society?

Where should we start? With tipping points, often simple changes can become forces for significant social redirections. So I would propose that we place considerable effort on teaching the spirit of the law and the letter of the law regarding speed limits. Driving most highways is a social experience of disregard for authority. Reversing that trend which is practiced by most adults might set a different direction regarding our societal conscience toward one another.

And how might we teach ethics on the highway? We have two options: enforcement and example. For police and state patrol to enforce the speed limit laws in American, we would need many times more officers and our courts would be jammed. However, if gradually our officers slowed us all down through example, we might just make this adjustment. We would also need media coverage to explain not only the police actions but the spirit of the law—looking out for the safety of others and yourself. And we should hope that this ethic of looking out for each other will slowly extend into our places of businesses and government, our homes and schools, and on into our global community.

*October 29, 2009*

## Pray! Listen, Discern and Act Ambitiously

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*The Apostle Paul to the Philippian Church (Philippians 2:3-8 NIV)*

The temptation to retreat from the spiritual conflict around us or to fight in the ways of the world is real. Why would one want to stand and be exposed to great hurt as our world heads into the nexus of innovative technology and plain old human greed and turf battles. Or why would one not want to engage in a manner that fights fire with fire? Do we not have the right to protect that which we possess and deem precious? Can we not be ambitious for more?

The ways of fighting in the kingdom of God are quiet different from running from or slamming our enemies. *The primary fighting motif of the kingdom of God is to fight for our enemies with love. And Jesus is our example and leader.*

Great humility is needed to embrace this type of fighting *for* rather than against. Jesus is the example of humility. He left His rightful place in heaven and became a man (Philippians 2:3-8). He fought for us with humility, acts of kindness, teachings on the Kingdom of God and suffering.

As we consider our ambitions, we have many options that seem to filter into two categories—selfish ambitions and quiet ambitions. From Philippians 2 we are exhorted to “do nothing out of self ambitions.” And I Thessalonians 4: 11,12 encourages us “... to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

In these two extremes, we find a pathway from the inclinations of human nature to the spirit filled person who is engaged with the missional heart of God and empowered to love from a heart that is quieted in the presence of God. Jesus fought for people in what must have looked like non-quiet ways. He healed the sick, tossed out demons, turned over temple tables of greed and raised the dead. And He did it from a heart that was at daily peace with His Father as He spend times alone in prayer—a quiet ambition.

As we pray and listen, we discern the will of God. When we pray only to request release from our needs, we miss the heart of prayer. We miss our opportunity to listen and discern the mind of God and receive the grace of His presence. He often gives us what we ask, yet He wants to give us more—more of Himself.

So pray, listen, discern and act with quiet, selfless ambition as we seek to win over our enemies with love. Did not Jesus our Lord model and lead us into this pathway?

*July 3, 2103*

## My Gifts, Calling and Orientation in the Kingdom of God

*For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Romans 11: 29 (KJV)*

On an individual level, we all need to consider what gifts God has given us and what work He called us to do. We all have common gifts and callings from which our individual gifts and calling make sense.

As followers of Jesus, we are given the great gift of the Holy Spirit Who empowers us, seals us, guides and comforts us and exhorts us as we live life. We all have a calling as children of God to boldly enter into the very presence of God—into the heart and purposes of God. And within these commonalities, we have individual distinctives.

For me, I would say the core gifts of the Spirit that God has graciously given me are wisdom, knowledge, teaching, faith and prophecy. These are truly gifts—they are not derived by me. And they are for the glory of God, not mine.

What *wisdom* I might have comes only from Him. True wisdom is described in James 3: 17 as “... the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

At times I sense that God is using me as a “broken reed” to sound forth His true wisdom among us. And at various times, others affirm this. At other times, my fears and hurts mask any hint of true wisdom from above.

The *knowledge* I have of the reality of the Kingdom of God has been formed through many hours of study, memory, prayer reflection and meditation on the living Word of God. That knowledge has been enhanced as I have somewhat explored mathematics, physical sciences and social sciences and a bit of history, languages and arts.

The times I have been given the privilege to *teach* others (by speaking, interactive discussions and writings). These teachings have flowed from the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. I have sought to bring perspectives on life and godliness to others that are based on Scripture and have a ring of wisdom applied to current personal, group or cultural contexts.

In *faith*, Jen and I have moved to Virginia Beach, Princeton, Richmond, Colorado Springs, Raleigh and Moscow, Russia. And we’ve fundraised for the ministry that God has called us to. Faith comes from God—it is a gift, not a self-generated quality.

And the gift of *prophecy* is one that I continue to grow into. A prophet sees things in light of future consequences. If we continue in this path, then these consequences will result. Some consequences are positive while others we need to avoid. The prophet’s world is engaged in consequences and telling others of them.

Often negative consequences can arouse anger in the prophet’s heart. He can be mad at others who will go blindly apart from God. The prophet Jonah is an example of an angry prophet. However, God

seeks to move the angry prophet into a place of weeping, into a weeping prophet. Jeremiah's lamentations illustrate the heart of a weeping prophet as does Jesus' lament for Jerusalem as He was being lead to the cross.

I seem to see future consequences of present actions and future imaginations—and I tend to weep. We need to weep over our own actions and imaginations and of those of our world regarding a broad range of issues and consequences springing from our continued rebellion against the Triune God.

My calling statement has shifted over the years into a very focused statement. I am sure I will continue to refine the below statement, but the heart of it has been in place for decades.

*As a lover of the Triune God and a weeping prophet, I am called, gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to help bring the goodness and message of the Gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom across generations and cultures through spiritual generations of lifetime lovers of God and kingdom laborers who live, work and disciples in our post-Christian Western and spiritually pluralistic era—among those who believe and those who do not yet believe.*

And finally, my orientation in the kingdom of God is from the vantage point of *creativity*. God has made us in His image and He is the Creator God. He originates from nothing. We humans can use, modify and create from something. We are given time and space as irreducible minimum from which to exhibit and explore creativity. Over my lifetime I have sought, with varying degrees of success, to see, do, experience and build life from a creative heart, mind and soul—thus reflecting and glorifying the One Who has made us all.

***YOUR THOUGHTS:***

*What are your gifts, calling and orientation in the Kingdom of God?*

*Written July 2103*

# An Introduction to Long Range Planning with Discernment

*Remember the past and learn  
Decide in the present and live  
Imagine into the future and plan  
Listen the Spirit of God and discern.  
Trust God for all our times and spaces!*

We all plan. Some of us like to plan only for a short timeframe—a day, a week or maybe a month. Sometimes our circumstances permit us the luxury of only planning a few hours or minutes ahead. In any case, human nature is prone to look ahead and make adjustments to arrive at desired ends.

In this paper we will explore the idea of long range planning. Each of us has an internal guide as to how long it is reasonable or comfortable to plan. For some, long range is a year or maybe five. For others, ten or twenty or even a hundred years represents a good time frame for planning. For the sake of this paper, let's assume we are planning for five to ten years.

In order to engage in such long range planning, we should explore the Biblical warning to *not* plan ahead as well as the Biblical encouragements to plan for future realities. This “do it” and “don't do it” paradox is important to address as we seek to walk with God and imagine the outcomes of our efforts and His empowerment.

*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. James 4:13-17*

*“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:34*

*You desire {my comment: things for your short-term and long-term future} and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:2-8*

If we stop with these passages, one could conclude long range planning is only a folly of human arrogance, fear and greed (coveting). However, consider other encouragements to plan across time.

Jesus planned on his crucifixion at least three years in advance, probably from childhood.

The children of Israel planned on a series of battles for conquering the promised land. Those battles took about seven years to complete.

Jesus told us that it is folly not to carefully plan as we go to war and as we engage in societal building (Luke 14:28-33)

I would suggest that long range planning can be an act of fear, pride and/or greed. Or it can be an act of faith as we walk into the purposes, plans and heart of God. We get to choose the interiors of our hearts as we plan. Let's avoid Winston Churchill's observation ...

*Why, you may take the most gallant sailor, the most intrepid airman or the most audacious soldier, put them at a table together - what do you get? The sum of all fears.*

Long range planning is always problematic. Events change, people change, resources come and go—life is dynamic and often comes with more pain and suffering than we like to include in our long range thinking. And we must fight the heart traps of pride, fear and greed. However, God is good and at work all around us and into the near and far futures. His purposes and story reveal Himself to all the family of God on earth and in heaven. As we seek to plan today for future realities, we approach this effort with the humility of dependency and pray for wisdom and discernment as we believe that God will provide our needs—on His terms.

To me, long range planning involves perceiving the story of God of overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21) and discerning His agenda within His story. This redemptive agenda is always at work and extends across spiritual and biological generations. “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations” (Psalm 33:11). We need to perceive both the evils of our day and the goodness of God in the midst of great opportunities, joys and suffering while looking backward to perceive the previous works of God enacted through the faith of many (Hebrews 11).

As we consider five to ten years ahead, we also embrace the need to plan for shorter timeframes. However, if we try to blend short horizons with a longer view, we may find in retrospect that we are reacting tactically to immediate realities while failing to see the bigger picture of God. Jesus kept His eye on the long term—the cross, resurrection and ascension as the Slain Lamb of God and the redemptive way for all humanity. The disciples often wanted to react to the immediate circumstances without a view for the longer view. For instance, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to scorch those different from them; they wanted to protect Jesus from the cross.

Perceiving God's story and discerning His agenda in the details requires much prayer and engagement with the Scriptures. God has revealed much in the Bible. We do well to deeply explore His eternal perspective on reality. And we do well to implore Him as we walk forward in order to discern His will. He has sent His Spirit to be our Comforter and our Guide. So it is in this context of constant discernment in prayer, that we explore long range planning.

If we are planning to go on a long journey, it is helpful to know something about 1) our core culture, 2) our direction, 3) our context, 4) our “fellowship”, 5) our funding, 6) our progress, 7) our results, 8) our reshaping, and 9) our reasons (whys). Below are subtopics to consider for each of these long



range planning broad brush strokes. These subtopics are suggestions for explorations; not all are imperative for effective long range planning.

#### OUR CORE CULTURE

- 1) Who's going and who are "we" ... IDENTITIES
- 2) What DNA life and ministry glues us together ... PASSION & VALUES
- 3) What past blessings, failures and weights are we bringing with us ... CORPORATE MEMORY & BAGGAGE
- 4) How do we interpret power, authority, truth and beauty among us ... DERIVED MEANINGS
- 5) Who and/or what empowers our being and doing ... DEPENDENCIES & THE HOLY SPIRIT
- 6) Who are we becoming proactively or by default ... CULTURE CHANGE

#### OUR DIRECTION

- 7) Who motivates us to go ... OUR CALLER & HIS HEART
- 8) What direction we are going ... SCRIPTURE, HIS PROMISES & OUR MISSION
- 9) What motivates us to go ... INTERNAL & EXTERNAL NEEDS
- 10) Where we are starting from ... STARTING POINTS
- 11) What are the primary obstacles we anticipate encountering ... SHOW STOPPERS
- 12) Do we have a reliable map and an ability to read it ... MAPPING POINTS
- 13) What is the endpoint of our mission ... OUR VISION
- 14) How long do we anticipate the journey to be ... TIME HORIZONS
- 15) How will this direction change who we are becoming ... DIRECTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

#### OUR CONTEXT

- 16) Who are the people we seek to serve ... AUDIENCE CULTURE
- 17) What spiritual forces are we up against ... SPIRITUAL WARFARE
- 18) What government factors are in play in our context ... GOVERNMENTS

## OUR "FELLOWSHIP"

- 19) Who will lead us and how will he/she/they lead ... LEADER SELECTION & LEADER TYPES
- 20) What primary functions, processes and procedures are needed for us to make progress ... FUNCTIONS & PROCESSES
- 21) What are the strengths and weakness of our "fellowship" ... GIFTS, ABILITIES & ROLES
- 22) How will we work together ... DIVISION OF LABOR & STRUCTURES
- 23) How will we talk to each other ... DIALOGICAL COMMUNICATION
- 24) How will we make choices and course corrections ... DISCERNMENTS & DECISION MAKING
- 25) How will we problem solve in the immediate and for the future ... INNOVATIONS & CREATIVITY
- 26) How might we keep solidified structures from impeding us ... DEFERENCES ACROSS LINES
- 27) What team metaphors best serves our journey for shifting situational leadership ... TEAM TYPES
- 28) How will we grow as individuals and in our roles ... LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & FULLY HUMAN
- 29) How will we grow as a group ... LEARNING & DECIDING COMMUNITIES
- 30) How will we embrace and empower diversity of ability, perspective, identity and mission with insiders and outsiders ... DIVERSITY & UNITY
- 31) How are we learning from others on similar journeys throughout history ... META-STORY COMMUNITIES
- 32) How will we manage changes in leadership ... LEADER REPLACEMENT & SUCCESSION

## OUR FUNDING

- 33) What would it cost to pursue our vision over the next 10 years ... COST ESTIMATES
- 34) What models and streams of income will best serve our journey ... INCOME MODELS
- 35) How will we best steward and account for our use of resources ... STEWARDSHIP & ACCOUNTING
- 36) What will we do during times of plenty and scarcity ... CONTENTMENT & FAITH

## OUR PROGRESS

- 37) How will we confront systemic evils and win over enemies ... REDEMPITIVE WAYS
- 38) How will we handle dissonance and chaos ... CONFLICT RESOLUTION & STABILIZING
- 39) How will we access progress and face failures ... 360 REVIEWS & EMPOWERMENTS
- 40) How will we manage corruption of motives and behavior among us ... DISCIPLINE & REDEMPTION
- 41) How will we care for one another when times are hard and people suffer ... COMFORT & RENEWAL
- 42) How will we relate to people of similar or different journeys ... PARTNERSHIPS & TOLERANCES
- 43) How are we adjusting to external rules and regulations as we go ... EXTERNAL RULES
- 44) How will we perceive our fallen journeyers ... HONOR & DISGRACE
- 45) What might cause us to turn back ... UNACCEPTABLE LOSSES
- 46) Are there numbers for assessment of quantities with qualities ... MAGIC NUMBERS
- 47) How will we reward good choices and motives and moderate bad ones ... FEEDBACK REWARDS & CONSEQUENCES
- 48) How do we define and handle success ... PROGRESSIVE & ULTIMATE SUCCESSES

#### OUR RESULTS

- 49) What good will we do as we go ... ETHICAL GOODNESS OF THE GOSPEL
- 50) What impact has our message had with others and ourselves ... REDEMPITIVE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL
- 51) What resources (financial, people, information systems, etc.) we have spend and accumulated in this journey ... RESOURCES ACQUISTIONS
- 52) Who has joined us in our journey ... AUDIENCE & FELLOW JOURNEYER
- 53) What internal and external evils have we successfully encountered along the way ... SHOW STOPPERS & ADJUSTMENTS
- 54) What impact will our journey make in the scope of our life-times and human society ... OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

#### OUR RESHAPING

- 55) How will we accommodate cycles of growth and shrinkage ... RESTRUCTURING
- 56) How might our focus of mission and conformity of forms impede our journey and vision ... REINVENTING

57) What adjustments might we need to make in perspectives, heart alignments, actions and mission to arrive at our vision ... RESHAPING

#### WHYS – OUR REASONS

58) What is the compelling “why” we are going ... ULTIMATE RE-BEGINNINGS

59) What calling do we have in life that might transcend our mission together ... LIFE CALLING

60) How are we changed in our journeying to be like our Caller... SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

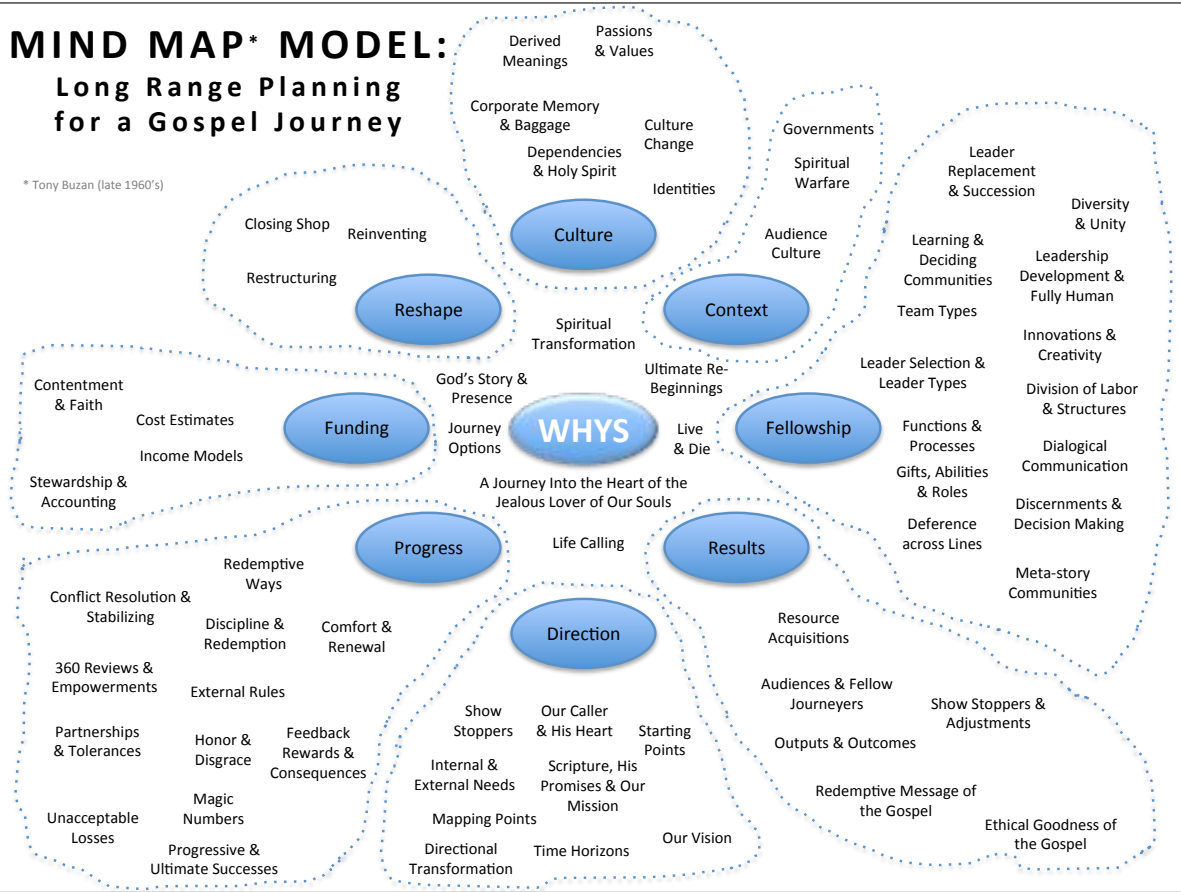
61) Where is the Triune God in all of our journeying .... GOD’S STORY & PRESENCE

62) How have our hearts aligned more closely with the heart of God ... A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF THE JEALOUS LOVER OF OUR SOULS

63) Is there a better journey to be on ... JOURNEY OPTIONS

64) Is this journey worthy to live for and to die for .... LIVE & DIE

The above are brush strokes for long range planning within a Christ-centered mission. (See below for a mind map of long range planning that corresponds with these brush strokes.) We can add or subtract from this list of factors as needed. However, for us to planning across a long range of time, it is beneficial to explore our core culture, direction, context, fellowship, funding, progress, results, reshaping and our whys (reasons). Without some emphasis on each of these eight broad categories, we might fail to see the big picture required for effective long range planning that relies on the Spirit of God as our Guide and Empowerer. These factors should be addressed in a semi non-sequential and interactive manner. They are all pertinent but not equally pertinent all the time.



Though mind maps are thorough, they are seldom easy to remember. Below is a more manageable way of planning. It is a modification of T. J. Addington's book *Leading from the Sandbox* (2011). The inner four categories are Addington's sandbox. The outer eight categories are presented to account for other factors that should be considered as long range planning is done.



The inner ring of issues—mission, guiding principles, focus and preferred culture—provides us with a four handles for leading a church or mission or any organization into a near-term future. The outer ring of eight provides a way forward in refining our discernment, planning and leading as we look at the long view. However, the full mind map of long range planning represent a more thorough approach—but it is far more difficult to remember all these interactive elements.

All planning can be done with or without a listening ear to the Spirit of God. He is our guide. We need to listen to discern His leading in our planning. Otherwise we may find that God simply doesn't empower our efforts or worse—He resists them.

This discernment process often is slower than we would like. We often want control and accomplishment and glory. God wants us to depend on Him; to trust His goodness; to seek His face. As we plan, it is helpful to keep the redemptive agenda of God forefront in our planning. His agenda will be fulfilled in the end so our discernment of His agenda is crucial in our long rang planning.

## **Bible Study**

To gain a better perspective for long range planning, please read/study/overview the following passages and address the questions below.

### ***Why do nations fail?***

From a macro view, our understanding of society will inform our long range planning. And a key to this understanding from a Biblical viewpoint is to grapple with the question of how does a nation go so far astray that the God of the universe sets His face against her and brings judgment. Survey Ezekiel chapters 25 to 32—prophecies against the nations. Then read Ezekiel 16—prophecies regarding the Israelites. Then summarize key reasons why these nations fail.

### ***Why do churches fail?***

Jesus had many things to say to the seven churches of Asia Minor. As you read Revelation 2 and 3 look for show stoppers that could derail the churches. Summarize these stoppers and reflect on any other passages to address the question “Why do churches/mission organizations fail?”

### ***Why do individual believers fail to walk with Christ for a lifetime?***

Reflect on the passages for nations and churches and any other passages that you find that relate to individual believers failure to walk with Christ. Summarize your findings.

### ***Long-Range Planning Application***

Reflect on the show stoppers you have identified from your study of the Bible. How might these show stoppers inform issues to consider as we seek God in long range planning?

As you reflect on the realities of your life and ministry, are there any passages from this study that connect in your heart and mind? Explain.

As you reflect on the realities of your ministry context/organization, are there any passages from this study apply to the overall ministry? Explain.

## **Brief Survey**

1. When you think about planning, what TIME HORIZON do you naturally default to?
  - 1 day to 3 months
  - 3 months to 1 year
  - 1 to 3 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 25 years
  - other time horizons (explain)
  
2. Rate how EFFECTIVE long range planning has been in your OVERALL life experience on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 representing "HIGHLY INEFFECTIVE" and 10 representing "HIGHLY EFFECTIVE." Explain your response.
  
3. Rate how EFFECTIVE long range planning has been in your WORK/MINISTRY experience on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 representing "HIGHLY INEFFECTIVE" and 10 representing "HIGHLY EFFECTIVE." Explain your response.
  
4. What has been your EXPERIENCE regarding planning for 5 years and beyond?
  
5. Rate your COMFORT level in planning for a 5 to 10 year time horizon on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 representing "HIGHLY UNCOMFORTABLE" and 10 representing "HIGHLY COMFORTABLE." Explain your response.

## **Image Selection**

Find one to three images that reflect how you view or feel about long range planning. You can find images on-line, in magazines, etc. Briefly explain what story these image communicate to you and what attracted you to them.



***Optional***

Watch one or more of the *Lord of the Rings* or *Hobbit* movies and/or read the book(s) by J.R.R. Tolkien.

What do you observe that applies to long range planning?

How does this series address CULTURE, DIRECTION, CONTEXT, FELLOWSHIP, FUNDING, PROGRESS, RESULTS, RESHAPING and WHYS (Reasons)?

Why do you think the *Lord of the Rings* has sold over 150 million copies and the movies brought in about \$2.9 billion worldwide? What do you think is its appeal to so many across 40+ languages?

*Written in 2014*

## Resources to Explore

### CONNECT BIBLE STUDIES

GOD: Connecting with His Outrageous Love  
IDENTITY: Becoming Who God Says I Am  
SOUL: Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions  
RELATIONSHIPS: Bringing Jesus into My World  
LIFE: Thriving a Complex World  
FREEDOM: Breaking the Power of Shame

### IMAGE-BASED

The New Me  
Searching the Ordinary for Meanings  
Grapplings: Why Do People Suffer So Much?

### BOOKS

The Shame Exchange: Trading Shame for God's Mercy and Freedom  
Worth a Thousand Words: The Power of Images to Transform Hearts

### INVENTORIES

Breakthru: Discovering My Spiritual Gifts  
Breakthru: Discovering My Primary Roles

For the above resources see:

[www.ralphennis.com](http://www.ralphennis.com)

## About the Authors

Ralph and Jennifer Ennis have served with The Navigators since 1975. They have ministered at Princeton University, Richmond Community, Glen Eyrie Leadership Development Institute, The CoMission in Russia, and in Raleigh, NC. In 2006 Jennifer co-founded JourneyMates, a ministry to help people grow in intimacy with the Triune God through Scripture, silence and solitude.

Unless otherwise noted, the essays of the WB Series have been written by Ralph. However, each work was crafted in the context our marriage relationship and with the editorial benefit of Jen's perspectives and unique abilities.

In 2018 Ralph and Jennifer celebrated 45 years of marriage. They have four married children and 15 grandchildren.



Our web sites:

[www.journeymates.org](http://www.journeymates.org)  
[www.ralphennis.com](http://www.ralphennis.com)

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