

## Reflections on Continuity and Change

### Main Points to Highlight

- We are to protect the continuity of our stated purpose, core beliefs and foundational values
- We are to pursue innovative, pioneering, Spirit-led change in our contextual practices
- The right blend of continuity and change will help our movement thrive for decades

### Key Documents

JESUS SAID:

*“Every teacher of religious law who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a homeowner who brings from his storeroom new gems of truth as well as old” (Mat 13:52).*

### Expanded Reflection

Some idolize change; others fear or even loathe it. C. S. Lewis wrote, “Mere change is not growth. Growth is the synthesis of change and continuity, and where there is no continuity there is no growth.”<sup>1</sup> Change and continuity are both needed. All change and no continuity is death; all continuity and no change is paralysis. The right blend of change and continuity is life.

The image of Darlene’s Belief Tree is very helpful at this point. The roots, trunk and branches of a healthy tree continue year after year. But every year the tree bears new fruit. In this image we can see that continuity of beliefs, values and principles enables the creation of fresh fruit every year. In other words, life flows when innovative missional practices are built upon a faithful continuity of vision and values. When creative innovation is built upon unchanging truths the fruit will be healthy.

Missional life is adversely impacted when vision and values, beliefs and principles are tossed away and replaced with substitute frameworks. Wrongful innovation is destructive. But the inverse is also true. Missional life is impacted negatively when the practices are copied religiously without attention to context or seasons. Wrongful continuity is likewise destructive. As leaders we must always discern what is essential to keep and what is desirable to change. We are wise stewards if we include in our treasures the right old gems and the right new gems that best advance the kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> CS Lewis, *Hamlet: The Prince or The Poem?* Published in “Proceedings of the British Academy 18” (1942); and in CS Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays*, Walter Hooper, ed., Cambridge University Press, 1969. Found at [www.asms.net/faculty/bloom/hamletcsword.htm](http://www.asms.net/faculty/bloom/hamletcsword.htm)

## How Should We Translate the Bible?

### Main Points to Highlight

- God's call is multimodal; so hold unswervingly to *the what* and act creatively with *the how*.
- As beginners in the world of translation, we guard our hearts and walk in teachable humility.
- Keep in the mind the whole of the Covenant to End Bible Poverty Now!

### Key Documents

#### YWAM's CORE BELIEFS

*Youth With A Mission (YWAM) affirms the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God and the absolute reference point for every aspect of life and ministry...*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #1. KNOW GOD

*YWAM is committed to know God, His nature, His character and His ways as revealed in the Bible, the inspired and authoritative Word of God...*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #12. DO FIRST, THEN TEACH

*YWAM is committed to doing first, then teaching. We believe that firsthand experience gives authority to our words. Godly character and a call from God are more important than an individual's gifts, abilities and expertise.*

CONSIDER THESE SCRIPTURES that urge us to walk in unity: "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you" (Mat 18:19). "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! ... For there the LORD commanded the blessing ... (Psa 133:1,3),

### Expanded Reflection

As YWAMers we have been called to embrace a singular passion: to do all that we can to fulfill the Great Commission. But Jesus' final charge to his disciples has numerous implications ranging from gospel proclamation to an individual (Mar 16:15) to the discipling of whole nations (Mat 28:18-20)! There is an inherent multiplicity of actions that flow from an undivided embrace of Jesus' culminating mandate. There is no one way to do the Great Commission. In fact, there are many right ways to align ourselves with Jesus' final words to "go and ..."

In response to the Great Commission, YWAM has embraced the ministries of evangelism, training, and mercy. But each of them is multimodal. There is more than one way to evangelize. We preach on the streets, in schools, in jails, from door to door. We use drama, music, cultural art forms and festivals. While we enthusiastically affirm **the what** of the evangelism imperative, we wisely embrace a diversity of evangelistic **how's** – adjusting methodologies to fit a given context. Likewise, we train in more than one way. We teach in preschools, elementary schools, high schools, and universities, from short seminars to complete bachelor and master degrees. We applaud all these various training initiatives. Similarly, our expressions of displaying God's great mercy to others covers a great range of activities: we care for street children, have programs to rehabilitate prostitutes, do eye surgeries aboard ships, offer medical aid in refugee camps,

distribute food to the hungry, run community development projects... the list goes on and on. And we celebrate each of these varied expressions, for each and every one of them expresses the heart of God for needy people in a given situation.

One essential element that must follow our Lord's "go and..." charge is the need to end Bible poverty. This includes Bible translation among the Bibleless, but it also involves educational and inspirational activities among those languages with the Bible. All of this can be discovered in the "Covenant to End Bible Poverty Now!" the writing of which Loren oversaw. Therefore, it should not surprise us that, just as we have multimodal evangelism, multimodal training, and multimodal mercy, we should have multimodal translation. It is the YWAM way. It is the way that Loren and Darlene modeled for us. Loren spent his life casting vision of **what** we could do **with God** to advance God's dreams for the world. Because the vision was always massive and Loren was always speaking to the heart of the young person (the 15, 18, or 21-year-old would-be world-changer) he always gave a readily achievable example of **how** this could be done.

The example was always illustrative, never prescriptive. The example was intentionally motivational, designed to create a space in the heart of the young man or woman for faith to arise. When faith arose in the heart, impossible dreams became possible with God. The massive vision became readily do-able, giants could be conquered, and historic victories could be won. Loren understood this well. He was a master at inspiring faith. For this reason, the motivational "how-to" example was always intentionally simplified, a do-able place to start.

So, it must be with us. As we call the emerging generation to the task of ending Bible poverty in every language, it must not be complicated. But even the simplest call is costly. There will be a price to pay. As faith arises and commitments are made, there will be lessons to learn in order to see fruitful kingdom transformation. As we embark on serving mother tongue speakers as they translate the Bible in their heart language, we must maintain the heart of a learner. Not just because we are exhorted to learn in humility (Mat 11:29), but because we recognize that we simply have not yet done what we aspire to do. As of yet, no one has done a complete oral translation of the Bible. We probably need to do dozens before we can confidently speak of best practices. And even then, different circumstances will require different solutions. There is no "one size fits all" in Bible translation.

We must take every opportunity to end Bible poverty and spread the good news of Jesus' remarkable redemption! John Wesley, England's great revivalist, said, "*Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.*" Let us do likewise as together we employ every means and methodology at our disposal to end Bible poverty now! If we maintain our heart unity even as we employ various strategies, God will surely command his blessing to be upon us.

## Are We a Youth Movement or a Multigenerational Movement?

### Main Points to Highlight

- We are called to champion young people
- We are called to be a multi-generational movement
- Unless we are multi-generational true to God's call we cannot disciple nations

### Key Documents

#### WHO IS A YWAMer (by Loren Cunningham)

*As an all-volunteer, faith-missionary movement, YWAM includes every nationality, tribe, ethnicity (people group) and language group; all generations, but with youth as the majority...*

#### YWAM'S STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*Youth With A Mission (YWAM) is an international movement of Christians from many denominations dedicated to presenting Jesus personally to this and future generations, to mobilizing as many as possible to help in this task, and to the training and equipping of believers for their part in fulfilling the Great Commission...*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #6. CHAMPION YOUNG PEOPLE

*YWAM is called to champion youth. We believe God has gifted and called young people to spearhead vision and ministry. We are committed to value, trust, train, support, make space and release them. They are not only the Church of the future; they are the Church of today. We commit to follow where they lead, in the will of God.*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #10. FUNCTION IN TEAMS

*YWAM is called to function in teams in all aspects of ministry and leadership. We believe that a combination of complementary gifts, callings, perspectives, ministries and generations working together in unity at all levels of our Mission provides wisdom and safety...*

### Expanded Reflection

It is clear from our key documents and our historic practices that we are to champion youth in the context of a multigenerational movement. This is not achieved through organizational systems but through a familial framework. It requires faithful continuity to family values, much like that displayed by the Recabites in Jeremiah 35:1-19. The faithful commitment to hold fast continually to the values and practices of their ancestor Recab generation after generation is presented to us an example to imitate.

We must embrace a Recabite mentality if we are to see this movement remain mission true and vibrantly thriving for decades to come. Furthermore, without it we can never aspire to see nations discipled (Mat 28:18-20). For this to be achieved, it requires intentional multigenerational continuity. This is hinted at in the repeated statement, "the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations" found in Exo 20:5; 34:7; Num 14:18; Deu 5:9. This phrase "the third and fourth generation" is usually understood in Hebrew as

idiomatic for “a long time” (*The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, p 540). How long is a long time? Well, if a generation is something between 25 and 40 years, the shortest “long time” would be 75 years (three 25-year-long generations) and the longest “long time” would be 160 years (four 40-year-long generations). Midpoint would be around 120 years or about double YWAM’s current age. If we are to be a relevant missions movement to “the third and fourth generation” we have a long way to go.

How can we best facilitate an enduring movemental future? The story of Genesis helps inform our thinking at this point. God’s desire then – as now – was to see the redemption of individuals and the transformation of nations. In this book, we read the story of four generations: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Through the first three God was laying foundations for what he intended to do in the fourth generation. God’s hope was that through Joseph Egypt would be **saved** (Gen 41:35-36), but instead it ended up **enslaved** (Gen 47:21). God’s desire went unfulfilled, because the global purpose for which he had raised up this family was lost in the Joseph generation. The continuity of purpose was sadly broken. God’s disappointment is reflected in the fact that although he identified himself many times as the God of “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob” (Gen 50:29; Exo 2:24; 3:6,15,16; 4:5; 6:3; Deu 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; 1Ki 18:36; Mat 22:31,32; Mar 12:26; Luk 13:28; 20:37; Act 3:13; 7:8,32; Rom 9:5), he never once identified himself as the God of Joseph.

What might have occurred, if the multigenerational family had remained true to God’s mission through four generations? What might happen if we remain mission true well into the fourth generation? This is a challenging goal. In the Biblical account we see that in the story of Israel and Judah, there are never three – let alone four – good kings who did what was right in the Lord’s eyes in a row! The challenge of missional continuity is indeed great and requires unswerving attention to faithfully and constantly pursue doing things according to God’s unchanging character and ways.

## Reflections on the Tripod Message

### Main Points to Highlight

- The Tripod Message was given so that we would remain an apostolic movement
- The Tripod Message was reflected in the Nanning Covenant
- The Tripod Message inspired the “flattening of the chart” and the creation of ACTs

### Key Documents

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #5. BE VISIONARY

*YWAM is called to be visionary, continually receiving, nurturing, and releasing fresh vision from God. We support the pioneering of new ministries and methods, always willing to be radical in order to be relevant to every generation, people group, and sphere of society. We believe that the apostolic call of YWAM requires the integration of spiritual eldership, freedom in the Spirit and relationship, centered on the Word of God.*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #7. BE DECENTRALIZED

*YWAM is a Christ-centered, faith-based global volunteer movement, united by shared vision, core beliefs, foundational values, and relationships. We do not have a centralized structure. Every YWAM ministry has the privilege and spiritual responsibility to develop and maintain healthy relationships with appropriate authorities and circles of elders.*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #10. FUNCTION IN TEAMS

*YWAM is called to function in teams in all aspects of ministry and leadership. We believe that a combination of complementary gifts, callings, perspectives, ministries and generations working together in unity at all levels of our Mission provides wisdom and safety. Seeking God’s will and making decisions in a team context allows accountability and contributes to greater relationship, motivation, responsibility, and ownership of the vision.*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #13. BE RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED

*YWAM is dedicated to being relationship-oriented in our living and working together. We desire to be united through lives of holiness, mutual support, transparency, humility, and open communication, rather than a dependence on structures or rules.*

### Expanded Reflection

When Loren first shared the Tripod Message in Nanning in 2002, it was with the intent that it would lay the groundwork for YWAM to remain a vibrant apostolic movement for decades to come. The resultant Nanning Covenant summarized some of the key points of that message: “We agree with his word to us to encourage the newest to the oldest YWAMers to seek to know and obey his voice in the freedom of the Spirit, and to release them into the fullness of the promises of God. We joyfully submit our personal ministries and the corporate ministries we lead to the spiritual eldership of the GLT and the appropriate elderships at all levels under the GLT. We choose afresh to be transparent and open in our relationships with each other, and to give fresh emphasis in our mission to God's Word as our compass and plumbline for daily living.”

It took some time for the implications of the Nanning Covenant to impact our organizational framework as a mission. Years of discussion and reflection followed but it was not until the Global Leadership Gathering in Singapore in 2014 that at Loren's prophetic insistence that our historic transnational organizational was set aside and Area Circle Teams (ACTs) were launched. We certainly still have more to learn about how God wants us to participate with him in leading an ever-expanding movement. And this transitional time since Loren's graduation gives us a unique opportunity to seek God's face and continue to build frameworks that encourage freedom in the spirit, that is built upon relational realities, that honors the role of elders, and which does all under the Lordship of Jesus and the Word of God.

We are still learning how to biblically practice eldership across our mission. Too often we slip back into cultural expressions of leadership or we embrace leadership models that are designed for other spheres (government, business, etc.). We are still learning how to "eld" appropriately. We have come to understand that "elder" is not a title worn on the chest by an individual. Leadership by eldership is a function that is activated only when the team of elders are gathered together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is an event-based leadership, much like that which occurred in Acts 15 when the elders gathered from around the world to seek God's will together. Our eldership circles are not standing committees. They are teams of godly women and men who convene on particular occasions to pray and seek God together in order to address particular issues. In other words, when we face challenges of any kind, we run towards one another seeking relational mutuality and the word of the Lord.

This way of leading embodies concept of subsidiarity which is implicit in our Foundational Value #7. It means that our movement embraces as much government as necessary, and as little as possible. Our leadership is not about titles or status. Rather it is built on our corporate pursuit of God and his will together. If we do this, we can be assured that the apostolic nature of our movement will thrive for decades to come.

## Reflections on the Future of Leadership in YWAM

### Main Points to Highlight

- We will gradually form a team of seventy-some Global Elders who reflect our YWAM tribe.
- The Global Elders will be a multigenerational team of recognized & anointed women & men.
- The Global Elders will function at events which overlap with ACTs & other gatherings.

### Key Documents

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #7. BE DECENTRALIZED

*YWAM is a Christ-centered, faith-based global volunteer movement, united by shared vision, core beliefs, foundational values, and relationships. We do not have a centralized structure. Every YWAM ministry has the privilege and spiritual responsibility to develop and maintain healthy relationships with appropriate authorities and circles of elders.*

#### FOUNDATIONAL VALUE #11. EXHIBIT SERVANT LEADERSHIP

*YWAM is called to servant leadership as a lifestyle, rather than a leadership hierarchy. A servant leader is one who honors the gifts and callings of those under his/her care and guards their rights and privileges. Just as Jesus served His disciples, we stress the importance of those with leadership responsibilities serving those whom they lead.*

Consider the following SphereView reflections on key Government passages:

13. *Anarchy Undermines Justice* (Jdg 21:25): Having no government is not a Biblical solution to resolving problems caused by a corrupt government, because the root problem lies in the hearts/lives of individual men and women. Appropriate government is a deterrent against lawlessness (see Romans 13).
14. *Bureaucracy Undermines Justice* (Ecc 5:8-9): Having more government is not a Biblical solution to resolving problems caused by a corrupt government, because the root problem lies in the hearts/lives of individual men and women. More individuals working in the public sector increases more potential for corruption. Remember the “Goldilocks principle”: neither no government; nor excessive government; but instead, a “just right” sized government. The Biblical concept is called “subsidiarity” which means “as little government as possible but as much as necessary” In Exodus 18 we see Moses tries to solve an issue at the lowest/most local level possible.

### Expanded Reflection

At present we feel that we are to keep the Founder’s Circle as is – a group of senior YWAM elders called together by the Founders to assist them in their role as founders of the mission. As long as Darlene feels that this is beneficial for her, she is free to convene the FC to join her in praying for and inspiring the YWAM missionary tribe. She is free to convene the whole group or any subset of that group as she wills when she wills. Together with Darlene, the current Founder’s Circle will approve those who will be called to form the new group of Global Elders described below.

It is time to start forming a group of Global Elders who can serve now and beyond the founding



generation. This group can begin small and in time it can grow to incorporate as many as seventy-some elders (see Num 11:16-30). Elders like those in this story are **not selected and appointed**, they are **recognized and anointed**. There is no need to rush this process. We could get there gradually, perhaps starting with 20 growing to 35 and then to 50 and eventually arrive at seventy-some elders. Some members of the Founder's Circle may serve as Global Elders; others will not. Likewise, some YWAM leaders who have not served on the FC will be invited to serve on the team of Global Elders.

This Global Elder group is **not a group that represents** every ministry expression, making sure that everyone has a seat at the table (advocating for their particular). But it is a **group that reflects** our global family as God has constituted it (advocating for the whole). It should include women and men from many of the nations and language groups that make up the YWAM world. The beautiful multigenerational diversity of our global tribe should likewise be reflected in this group of global elders. Perhaps a third of them should be those who are "between thirty and fifty years of age who were eligible for service in the" ministry (see Num 4:23,30,35,39,43,47); a third between 50 and 65; and a third over 65.

Like the FC, the new group of Global Elders will be an event-based eldership. In other words, they are elders when they come together to pray, discuss and seek God's face. "Elder" is **not a title** any individual carries on his own. Instead, it is **a function** that describes their service when they are gathered in corporate fellowship under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is noteworthy that the eldership in Moses' time is only described when they are functioning together as a group. In order to facilitate maximum participation from our far-flung global family it will be crucial to create a rhythm of meetings that serves the mission well. A suggestion to meet as the Global Elders three times in a two-year cycle (once every 8 months, for example: June in year one; and February and October in year two) as a repeatable pattern. It is recommended that these three gatherings be held one in the Americas; one in Europe/Middle East/Africa; and one in Asia/Pacific – our historic YWAM "fields."

It is likewise recommended that when the Global Elders meet, the ACT elders from the corresponding field meet in the same place immediately afterwards, so there can be a coordinating overlap between the Global and ACT eldership groups. The Global Elders might also come together before other global gatherings (for example in March when the FC and CILT regularly meet, or in September around future YT events), helping the YWAM family to function in rich relational unity.

The Global Elders would function in both a **priestly manner** (speaking to God on behalf of the people; emphasizing intercessory prayer) and in a **prophetic manner** (speaking to the people on behalf of God, emphasizing visionary strategy). It would be responsible to watch over our four legacy words; our covenantal renewal documents, our ministries of evangelism, training and mercy, our global corporate events, our various leadership development initiatives (always with an eye to invest in the emerging generation of leaders), issues related to our corporate communication as well as major fiduciary or legal concerns.