

Part II: Best Practices to Evaluate the Six Critical Factors in Your Life or Church

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Preface

Writing this paper humbled me. Before I began writing I thought I had some pretty good ideas and strong convictions about how to evaluate whether a given individual or church was on its way to seeing generations. During the process, I became much more aware of the problems associated with my preferred evaluation forms. Consequently, I became much more gracious toward others and the evaluation forms they use. Writing has been sanctifying! In spite of identifying problems with my recommended evaluation forms, I circulate this paper for two reasons:

First, even though evaluation forms or criteria are largely subjective, evaluation is not. The scriptures make it very clear that stewardship without evaluation is a misnomer (see Part I). While we can debate the evaluation criteria that I suggest here, no matter how carefully I defend it, we cannot debate that evaluation is a critical step obeying our Lord's command to steward our lives. I pray this paper will inspire people who avoid evaluation to take a hard, objective look at how well they discharge our Lord's Great Commission.

Second, many are trying to evaluate their lives and churches. They struggle for some good suggestions on where to begin. I pray that this paper will aid those who sincerely want to evaluate how well they obey our Lord's unequivocal commands.

Introduction:

Every disciple will give an account of how faithfully he discharged his life to accomplish the intent of the Lord Jesus Christ *at death*. Therefore, the wise disciple will evaluate how faithfully he does this during *his life*. To not evaluate is tantamount to not stewarding your life well—a crime described as “wicked and lazy” by the Lord (Mat 25.26). However, there is no perfect way to evaluate how well you are living out the functions prescribed by the Lord. Here I explain what criteria I recommend to evaluate how you are doing at discharging the Six Critical Factors of a Multiplying from Part I (see Table 1)¹. There are other functions or critical factors that one could evaluate in a given individual or church. However, as discussed in Part I, these functions, done well, seem to be the common denominator in churches or individuals that see multiplication of disciples and generational growth². Therefore, I will focus on how to evaluate the functions.

No evaluation criteria is perfect, but the point of this discussion is to suggest some of the better forms for evaluating functions in our day. One could take issue

| Function | Recommended Evaluation Criteria |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Laying Foundations | How many non-disciples meet with our community to discuss spiritual things? |
| Go to the Lost | How many people have demonstrated their profession of faith through baptism in our community? |
| ...on to Discipleship | How many people are in one-on-one discipling relationships in our community? |
| Toward Christlikeness in Community | Has this community committed to being a local church? |
| Under Godly Leadership | Have we raised up a leader who can generate new community or church? |
| Spiritual Generations | Has our church reproduced another church? |

Table 1

¹ If you are more acquainted with the four fields, see part I for the overlap of the Six Critical Factors and the Four Fields.

² The express grand objective of our Lord is “disciples of *all nations*” (Mat 28.19-20). The only feasible way for the Church to accomplish our Lord’s objectives is through multiplication of disciples. A cursory mathematical analysis of any other approach reveals that unless we multiply we cannot even keep up with the birth rate on the planet.

from a biblical standpoint with every single one of the recommended evaluation criteria above. However, after considering the discussion in this paper, if you are still not satisfied, I admonish you to replace any evaluation criteria you want with another criteria. But do not eliminate one without replacing it with an equally challenging criteria. To do so might lead to ignoring or disobeying the explicit commands of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Laying Foundations

A survey of people's testimonies on how they entered the Kingdom of God will quickly reveal that most enter because of a relationship, not because they hear a message or read the bible. Certainly the latter two are components in why people enter the Kingdom, but most people make their first true observation about the love and trustworthiness of Jesus Christ as Lord in another person, not in the scriptures. For this reason, one of our best evaluation criteria of Laying Foundations in people's lives, is how many self professed non-disciples of Jesus will hang out with us in community? Certainly we want to lay foundations in people's lives who are already in the Kingdom of God, but if we do not spend time with the Lost we cannot expect them to trust the Lord as their King. We think people will believe and then belong, but really it is more likely that they will feel like they belong and then believe.³

The reason we use this criteria is because of the easy propensity in the west to compete with other bodies for believers to attend our church. From God's point of view this is simply rearranging the location of people who are already His. He

³ I first heard this turn of phrase from my friend Darren Lindblom.

receives no gain from it. However, we do want to compete with Satan for souls that belong to Him, as we are commanded (Mat 11.12, 16.18, Col 1.13).

In the west, it is important to make a distinction between those who have associated with Jesus at some point in their lives, and those who have trusted Him to be their King. Helping people see the distinction between wanting to be associated with Jesus and wanting to be submitted to Jesus is essential. In the west, many have merely associated with Jesus at some point. In associating, however, they come to believe that they are indeed Christians. Our Lord reminds us: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord' ...but I will say to them I never knew you" (Mat 7.22-23). Unfortunately in the west, the first step in helping someone enter the Kingdom is often helping them see that they are not already there. One of the best ways of identifying if you are laying foundations is by evaluating how many self-identified non-Kingdom citizens hanging out in your spiritual communities.

Of course, if we are going to use this criteria we are going to have to share the gospel of the Kingdom with these people so that they can either decide to commit their lives to Jesus as Lord, or decide to continue to run their own lives. In the mind of most people in the west they are neither in the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Evil. Rather, they are torn between these two Kingdoms daily. When we share a Kingdom oriented gospel with these people that removes the middle choice, they can begin to see their true spiritual state: separated from God. So, this first evaluation criteria implies that we are sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom and helping people in our communities identify if they are not already in the Kingdom of God. As an alternate evaluation criteria under "Laying Foundations" you might

evaluate how frequently your church actually shares the Gospel of the Kingdom and calls others into the Kingdom of God.

It is useful and quite biblical to lay foundations among those who are already in the Kingdom. In fact, it should be preferred in one case. That is the case in which you meet a believer who is not participating in Jesus Christ's mission to seek and save the Lost (Lk 19.10) and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28.19-20), but is willing to learn! If you can equip another believer to Lay Foundations you can double your work capacity and become more effective quickly at discharging the Lord's mission. Consequently, as soon as the Lord uses you to help someone else trust Him as King, equip them immediately to help you in fulfilling the Lord's mission on earth. However, the great entrapment for disciplemakers and church leaders is to become impressed by their influence to gather disciples who will listen to them teach and get help with their problems, but not to become involved in the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus. Challenge yourself to not use the evaluation criteria of how *many* disciples attend your church assembly. It is frequently a deceiving statistic.

There are related evaluation criteria for going to the Lost that you might use. Consider asking yourself how many people in your church have recently realized that they are not in the Kingdom and are now considering truly trusting Jesus? Ask yourself and the disciplemakers in your church how many non-Kingdom citizens consider you their close friend, from their point of view? The art of Laying Foundations is always wrapped up in the art of making friends and loving people.

Go To the Lost

In truth, it is impossible for any of us to know for certain that someone else has transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of God (Col 1.13). At best, we can assure someone else of their salvation, and we can do that solely based on the testimony they give and the behavior they demonstrate. As such, throughout history we have used every practice from catechism to a prayer to assure them of their salvation—neither of which are examples in the scriptures! The essential ingredient for transferring from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of God is *trusting* in Jesus to be Lord and Savior. This kind of trust always results in immediate obedience to the Lord, but it is never the obedience that does the transferring (Eph 2.8-10, James 2.24). Consequently, we could wait years to see consistent obedience as the evidence of trusting Jesus Christ as Lord, or we could assure people as soon as they utter out of their mouths in an emotional fit “I believe.” Neither are wrong, but we could probably be a little wiser than to operate at the extremes. This is why we look to the act of baptism.

Baptism does not have to be the first act of obedience and it is frequently not. However, it is an excellent first evidence of a transformed life because it does not insist the disciple show evidence of progressive repentance in moral character or changed worldview. It just requires him to get wet. In other words, it requires him to participate in a ritual instituted and demonstrated by Jesus Christ (Jn 4.1-2, Mat 4.13-17, Mat 28.19-20). Baptism is an ingenious institution of our Lord. It is so simple that anyone can do it, and it is just awkward enough that no adult will do it without good reason. Unlike the catechism or the prayer of salvation, it is an express command of Jesus (Mat 28.18-20, Mk 16.15-16) that shows evidence of the

inward trust in Christ. Of course, it is very possible to assure someone of their salvation incorrectly through baptism. It has certainly been abused throughout Church history. However, let me suggest some practical suggestions to return baptism to a potent step of obedience, rather than a meaningless ceremony.

First of all, in the west, you can find lots of adults who claim Christ as King who have not ever been baptized of their own free will. Sometimes we find adults who may have been baptized as infants. Challenge them. It is impossible to be baptized of your own accord as an infant. Well meaning parents have had their children baptized for centuries because they want them to be saved. However, no matter how badly you want your children to trust Christ, you cannot make them. In fact, if you baptize them as infants you may rob them of publicly declaring their own faith at their baptism when they have the wherewithal to make the decision independently. Sometimes we find adults who claim Christ but refuse to be baptized. Rebuke them. People who say they do not need to be baptized because they have trusted in Christ in their hearts espouse an oxymoron. It's like saying legally I'm a soldier, but I don't need to wear a uniform because I have a legal contract saying I'm a soldier. It's true the contract is what makes you a soldier, but implicit in the contract is submission to the military's rules. You cannot claim Christ as your Lord and then refuse one of his express commands!

Secondly, make baptism a *public* proclamation of one's faith. When we gather a bunch of believers together that the new disciple does not know to baptize him, the demonstration loses power. What if we told the disciple that he or she needs to get their lost friends together to witness the baptism. That would up the

stakes considerably. All men and women fear being hypocrites. If they proclaim their loyalty to Jesus Christ in front of all their lost friends, they will have to be serious about walking with him from that day forward.

Finally, insist that those you baptize can coherently share their own story about how they left the Kingdom of Darkness and entered the Kingdom of Light. We often read them a statement of faith and ask them to nod their head in agreement. It is a horse of a different color to ask a new disciple to explain *his* testimony, with *his* own words, in front of all *his* friends! We cannot guarantee this kind of baptism means that someone has entered the Kingdom, but if men and women are willing to be socially ostracized for their new trust in Christ, chances are they are serious!

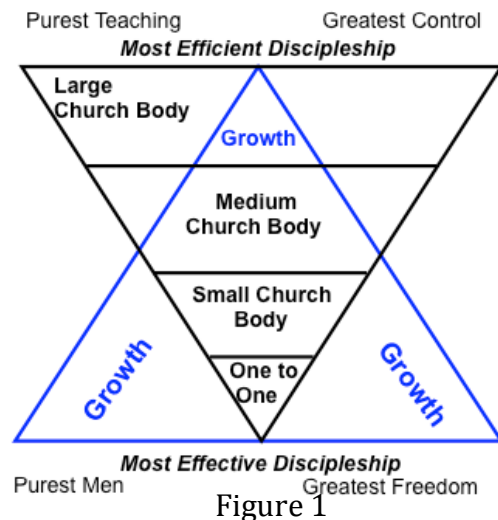
...On to Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of a man or woman becoming like Jesus (Lk 6.40). Evaluating that dynamic and complex process can be overwhelming. So much so, that it seems practically futile. When I assemble with a church and hear a message taught, it should disciple me. That is, it should help me become more like Jesus. When I meet with a living room sized church, it also discipulates me. Typically we find that meeting in a smaller group tends to be even more effective at helping disciples obey, not just know, the commands of Christ. Jesus insists: "If you hold to my teachings you are really my disciples" (John 8.31). However, when I meet with a mentor one on one it also discipulates me. Frequently we find that these kinds of meetings are so effective that people in the west refer to them as "discipleship." They can often claim: "my church doesn't do discipleship." What they mean is that they have experienced a much more potent expression of discipleship and they now

miss that. Here we have another illustration of how effective forms are frequently confused with function (Figure 1).

Meeting with a mentor one on one and small groups to discuss how obedience to the Lord progresses is one of the most potent forms of discipleship in our day. Few other forms of discipleship will impress the Lord's love, encouragement and commitment on the disciple more powerfully. Few other forms will humble, rebuke and stir him to action more vigorously. We see our Lord model this in his earthly ministry by selecting the twelve (Mk 3.14) and then often pulling out only the three (Mk 9.2, Mat 26.37). One

of the best evaluation criteria that you can use to use to discern whether your church executes the Lords command to "make disciples" is how many one on one mentoring relationships do you have in your church or ministry? Where we see this form taking



place in a given body of believers, we will almost certainly see spiritual maturity and Christ likeness take root.

Simple churches can be made to become more effective at making disciples by increasing the level of teaching to obey (Mat 28.20) and loving accountability. Frequently it is difficult for even small churches like this to achieve the level of intimacy and transparency necessary to significantly begin dealing with sin and life's toughest issues. I encourage the practice of one-on-one discipleship as the best evaluation criteria of whether discipleship is really happening.

Toward Christlikeness in Community

One-on-one discipleship will never be sufficient. The scripture is clear:

“It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and teachers...so that the body of Christ might be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of all the fullness of Christ”

--Ephesians 4.11-16

Following the logic of this passage, we learn that, without the myriad of different gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers), the body of Christ will never “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of all the fullness of Christ.” Making disciples is both an individual and corporate command. Without community, there cannot be maturity.

Saying that Jesus commanded us to make disciples, but not to make churches, is a false dichotomy. To separate what Jesus commanded me to do from what He does is to remove the sovereignty and personal responsibility tension insisted on in the scriptures (Phil 2.12-13, 2 Peter 1.10). Any step of obedience we make is always empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8, Rom 15.13, 1 Thes 1.5). Any attempt to separate His work from our part in His work is impossible. Communities of disciples, or churches, are an unavoidable, necessary, and healthy bi-product of making individual disciples. It’s true He is building His Church (Mat 16.18), but His disciples are unequivocally the instruments He intends to use to build, strengthen, and govern it. We summarize this principle of corporate disciple-making by saying that “community” is a function. That is, it is something that every believer must participate in to be an obedient, growing disciple of Jesus Christ.

However, evaluating a community is far more complex than evaluating an individual disciple. In a western disciple's mind, if he or she is willing to devote one hour a week to spiritual events, the disciple will almost always attend the meeting that they consider to be their local church. We have done a fantastic job of communicating in the west that you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ and refuse to meet with His body, or Church, regularly (Eph 5.23b, Heb 10.24-25). However, we have done a terrible job of communicating the breadth of expressions that that church may take. These communities need not be led by men who have Masters of Divinity degrees, they do not need to be in public buildings, and they do not have to have theater level sound and lighting. They simply have to be men and women meeting in the name of Christ (Mat 18.20). Because we want to see the discipleship function carried out well, we encourage leaders to move toward a form of church toward the bottom of the triangle in chart 2.

In the west, however, serious paradigms have to be overcome to see these forms of church accepted as biblical and healthy. Herein I suggest that when people recognize these forms of church as legitimate church, you know you are moving toward powerful community and the function is being well lived out. However, seeing one of these discipling churches as a legitimate expression of church is usually not enough. It's one thing to mentally assent to the fact that these simple churches are not wrong, it's another thing completely to commit yourself to one of these churches.

In the west, we tend to have a consumer mentality. This is frequently just as true in the church we attend as the restaurant at which we choose to eat. We show

up expecting to be served, not to serve. However, when we grab ahold of one of these small disciple-making communities and say this is “my church,” it begins to cost us. We cannot avoid seeing the needs of others and we cannot avoid getting honest about where we really are in our walk with the Lord, Jesus Christ. Now we have to act and speak in church instead of just watch. If we call this group our bible study or any of the other modern code words for church (missional community, ministry, small group, etc), as soon as it gets painful, we will jettison it for an expression of church that leaves us alone and appeases our conscience. In the west, I believe you will not fulfill the true heart of biblical community and corporate discipling if your disciples do not commit to calling it and committing to it as church. As simple as it sounds, few standards for biblical community are as exacting and revelatory. You will know that you are fulfilling the function of community well when you have a team of people deeply committed to the community and each other. In the west, the best evaluation criteria I have found to determine if the function of community is happening is by asking the question: “does this community self identify as church?” In the east and among unreached peoples, there are no alternatives to church. Small bands of disciples struggle less with the idea of church, it’s their only option.

Under Godly Leadership

Developing simple and effective evaluation criteria to tell us if we are producing leaders daunts us. There are an infinite number of things that we want to instill in upcoming leaders. They need to have the necessary character, knowledge and skills to make disciples and persevere in many different contexts. We know that

if we do not produce leaders, even the most explosive movements will not prevail for the long term. In our effort to equip leaders with everything they will need to be successful and sustain movements, we often overlook one of the most obvious and exacting forms to evaluate leadership. Here is the great question: do our leaders have followers?

Jesus prays in John 17.6, "I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world." How does Jesus know who "those whom you gave me out of the world" are? Simple, they followed him when he called to them and said, "Follow Me" (Mat 4.19, Mk 1.17). Sure, John the Baptist points some of these men to Jesus, but Jesus, humanly speaking, does the hard work of keeping these men following Him. John might point them to Him, but he certainly does not command them to Him.

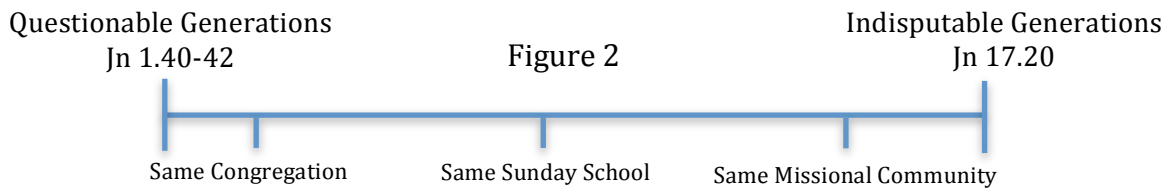
It is quite easy for an established leader to generate a community of followers and then tell his followers to listen to the up and coming leader. However, it is a completely different thing to tell the leader we are developing to go get his own followers: men who follow him of their own free will, not because we tell them to follow. See, when a leader has people who follow him because they want to, we know that all those followers testify with their actions and time, that they think the leader has the knowledge, character and skills to be a great leader. Their testimony votes loud and clear!

Do you want to know whether you've raised up a godly leader? You'll know if Christ-following men follow him without your telling them they have to (1 Cor 11.1, Heb 13.7). It's one thing for you to start a church and give it to someone else. It is another thing entirely for the leader you train to start a church himself.

Guided by a Vision for Spiritual Generations

Most every Christian leader with whom I discuss the spiritual generations function agrees vehemently that we must have them. However, defining what is an actual spiritual generation normally results in a disagreement, or worse, an argument. Evaluating this function can be particularly difficult. However, most will agree that we will know if we have a Spiritual Generation after we die. Once we pass into eternity if the men we invest in continue advancing God's Kingdom, we'll know whether we have a generation or not. However, if we find we do not have a generation, it's too late to do anything about it—we're already with the Lord in eternity! The trick then is to begin evaluating spiritual generations by removing yourself from the picture and seeing what happens. This can be extremely exacting and humiliating as things topple without your leadership. However, facing the brutal facts is better than thinking you have generations and finding out you don't after passing.

Let's continue with our example from John 17. In verse 20 Jesus prays "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." Here, Jesus prays clearly for his second generation, the men he invested in most deeply. He also prays for "those who will believe in Him through their message." This unnamed group of men is the third generation from Jesus Christ. He does not even know the names of these people yet, humanly speaking. So, when Peter leads Cornelius to Christ in Acts 10, years after Jesus's death, we see the most unshakeable definition of generations. We all agree this is indisputable



generations. Let's put this on the right side of a linear scale. See Figure 2. For the left side of the scale, take an example from the first chapter of John:

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴²And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Here the apostle Andrew brings the apostle Peter to Jesus. Imagine if we were to fast forward three years to that mountain in Galilee where Jesus gives His Great Commission, saying "Go make disciples of all nations" (Mat 28.19). If Andrew were to respond by saying, what do you think I have been doing with Peter for the last three years? I brought him therefore I have made a disciple out of him. With a little sanctified imagination, we imagine Jesus to say, "Thank you for bringing him, but I have been doing the discipling in his life. You need to find *and* invest in your own man." We reject this illustration as legitimate generations because we know that if we were to remove Jesus from the equation in John 1, Peter would not become the man that he turned out to be. By contrast, when Jesus is crucified the day after John 17, Andrew and Peter both get their own men to disciple, and Jesus has no influence on the lives of these men. Without a doubt we have generations here!

The first clear step in spiritual generations is raising up a leader who can call men and women to follow him, not us. As men and women begin to follow the new leader we equip, we can begin to see a third generation. That is people who are getting involved with Jesus not because of us, but because of the new leader. At this

point, one of the most difficult things for the first generation leader is to leave the third generation alone. As you gain visibility of what the third generation is doing, it takes great patience to let the second generation deal with it. This is especially true when you know you can do it better! However, the earth shattering truth about generations is the more you influence the third generation the less legitimate it is. In other words, if I spend enough time raising my grandchildren eventually all my friends, even the state, would recognize me as the parent and not the grandparent. If I raise my grandchildren, I am still working with a second generation.

On figure 2 below the line we have some modern day examples of what we might consider generations. First, a disciplemaker or pastor might consider the third generation from his life someone who was invited to his community by a person he was directly discipling. This is only slightly removed from the Peter and Andrew example. A little further down the line, the leader or disciplemaker might consider his third generation the members of a Sunday School class. The pastor directly invests in the leader of the Sunday school class (2nd Gen), and the members of the class are all the third generation. After the Sunday school class everyone attends the same Sunday morning service. Further down the line, the second generation from the pastor or disciplemaker leads their own missional community or cell group on a different night of the week, then everyone attends the same service on Sunday. Finally, almost at the end, we could put a church that births a second church. Members of the congregation in the second church do not even know anyone in the first church. You may use any evaluation criteria you wish if

you have spiritual generations, but the examples further toward the right are the safest bet.

How do I know whether I am actually moving toward spiritual generations? Who is trusting Christ and growing in Him through my second generation? Every time a church is started by someone I have trained I know that the people sitting in that church are third generation disciples from my life. Now, if I attend that church and participate in teaching frequently, I should begin to question whether I really have a third generation or not. If I take it over, I know I am still working with the second generation.

A Practical Strategy for Evaluation

One of the simple ways to evaluate your church network is to diagram it using the four fields for each church. Evaluate each church in your network by assigning a number to a field. Each field represents a function and the number in the field represents the evaluation criteria you used for the function (See Figure 3). In the example of the church to the right there are no non-Kingdom citizens in it, its body has baptized three

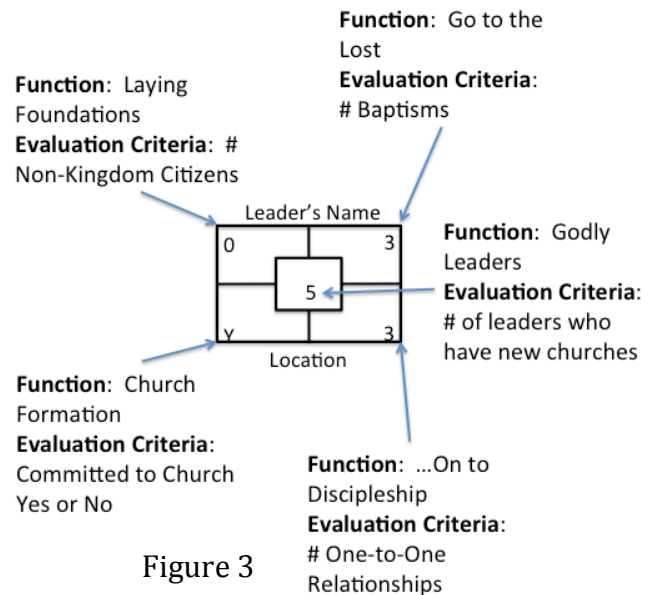


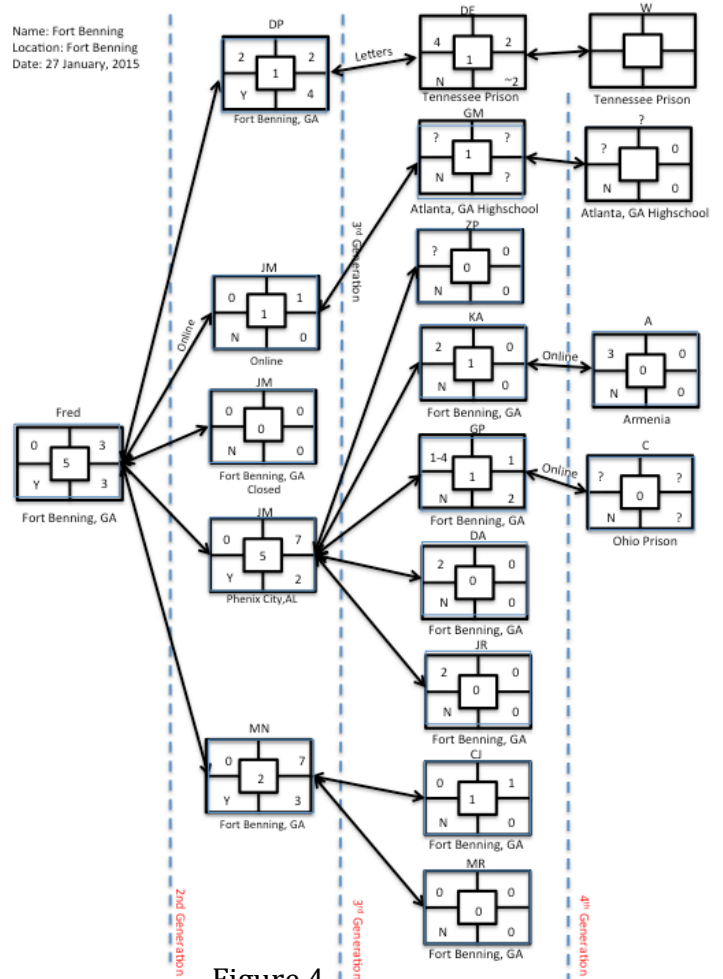
Figure 3

believers into it, there are three on going one on one relationships and the body has committed to being an expression of God's Church on earth. In the middle we see that the church has equipped five other leaders who are also leading an expression of church in some stage of its development. To see the extent to which this church is

guided by spiritual generations, you would map out the laborers and the churches they have formed in a generational map (see Figure 4). Sharing a generational map that evaluates each of the six critical factors objectively with your peers can provide invaluable feedback from the body of Christ on how you might better steward your life to produce Christ centered Kingdom growth. Of course, tools like this can be used to inflate some egos and make others feel inferior. Using tools like this are like switching from a hand saw to a chain saw. You can get a lot more done very quickly, but you also increase your chances of losing a limb!

Conclusion

Evaluating the ministry that the Lord has given you can be difficult and exacting, so much so that you might not want to do it thoroughly and accurately. Avoid the temptation. You can be sure that the Lord is evaluating the way you give your life away, and He will evaluate it perfectly when you meet him in eternity (Heb 9.27, Rev 2.1-7, Mat 25.24-30). The evaluation criteria in this paper are some recent best practices. Have them if you will, reject them if you must, but by all means develop your own convictions on how to evaluate the



must, but by all means develop your own convictions on how to evaluate the

functions and be honest with yourself. “The truth will set you free” (Jn 8.32). By truth we understand Jesus to mean not only that which is absolute, but also that which is honest. Let’s be honest about where we are on the way to generations. Because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, you are free to examine your labor for Him without fear of losing your relationship to Him or having to earn His favor. Involve a team of leaders, a cohort to use the chic expression, that will honestly evaluate how you are doing walking with the Lord and fulfilling his commands. People who hold you accountable like this do it because they love you, and they care so much. They want you see the greatest return on the Lord’s investment as possible. Feedback is an expression of love when done correctly. Seek it!