

Church Leader, would you help me understand your needs for next year?

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Leadership  Network *Advance*



## What Do You Need in 2019?

By Ron Edmondson, CEO

It's that time of the year. Again. It's as if God knew that we aren't a grateful enough bunch and so He ensured that November would eventually contain a time for giving thanks.

Well, November is already upon us, implying that Thanksgiving is around the corner which reminds me to:

- Thank you.
- Thank you for being a part of this conversation and community.
- Thank you for listening to us and giving us a chance to listen to you.
- Thank you for your interest to learn what's new, while teaching us what really goes on in the lives of church leaders and pastors.
- Thank you for still being engaged in this newsletter where we bear our souls and pen our thoughts.
- Thank you for being honest and detailed in your replies. (I love 'em and read every one!
- Thank you for being you.
- Thank you.

This is my first Thanksgiving since I was given a chance to be at the helm of this great organization. But I'm not just equipped by a team that is committed to pastors and churches.

I'm also empowered by tens of thousands of church leaders and pastors, such as yourself, who shape our conversations, programs and passion.

This Thanksgiving, I want to thank you and commit to serving you better. I want to ask and learn from you so that we can be relevant in our conversation and effective in our communication with you.

So, can you gift me 60 seconds of your time to answer a few questions? Would you [CLICK THIS LINK](#) so that I can get to know you better and thus, serve you well?

I don't want you to be just one more reader of our newsletter. I want to write to you and your interests and needs, and when you click the above link, you will help me do just that so I can better resource your needs and support your cause.

And if I haven't said it enough today, thank you.

I'm thankful that you have been connected to Leadership Network. I'm glad I had the opportunity to reach you today. And I'm delighted to get to know and serve you better in 2019.

Gratefully yours and wishing you a wonderful Thanksgiving week,

Ron

## Why Discipleship Eats Mentorship For Breakfast

*By Grant Skeldon*

Discipleship is more than mentorship. Meeting for coffee once a month is a great thing for mentors and mentees, but it's not as robust as discipleship. The church has fallen into a bad habit of equating discipleship with meeting over an early morning coffee to pray, read the Bible, and talk a little bit about life. This is beneficial for sure, but it's not discipleship.

Jesus didn't set a time to meet with his disciples for a brief conversation once a week for three years. Discipleship wasn't something he took care of before going about his business. Discipleship was his business.

Here is a critical distinction:



The church can no longer bank on just providing content and a message as their main commodity, because my generation can google content all day. The value of content is at an all-time low in this digital world. You don't need to go to church to get content. Millennials can live-stream a message, download a podcast, or watch a YouTube video, but there's still no app for genuine connection and life-on-life discipleship. That's what the church can provide that the world can't.

Now, when it comes to mentorship and discipleship, there is a massive difference. Mentorship says, "Add me to your calendar." Discipleship says, "Include me in your calendar."

The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians, "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." (1 Thess. 2:8). Which do you think is more impactful: when you tell someone the gospel with your mouth, or when you show it to them with your life?

My friend Connor perfectly illustrated this "follow me" mindset of discipleship when he asked the president of Dallas Baptist University, Dr. Adam Wright, to disciple him. As you can imagine, Dr. Wright is a wildly busy guy. When Connor approached Adam he declined because Adam had no spare time to give. Adam did, however, say he needed to wait a semester before taking on Connor, because he was already discipling three other guys. He met with each of them once a week for thirty minutes. But Connor told him, "I'm actually not interested in doing that kind of discipleship. I don't want to meet with you. I want to follow you."

Adam was a little taken aback, but once he realized that Connor's proposal was not going to cost him any more time, he accepted.

Fast-forward a few months. It's six in the morning, and Adam is preparing for the coming day by faithfully executing his early morning routine of praying, studying the Word, jogging, and eating breakfast with his wife and kids before driving to work.

This time, Connor was with him. He texted me that day, "Bro . . . get ready to feast your eyes on a new man. I am going to wake up early every single day!"

Discipleship is always better caught than taught.

The disciples never would have been prepared to do what God needed them to do if they'd just sat around and met with Jesus. They needed to follow him – to imitate him. Almost every story we have of Jesus with the disciples is of them on the move. They are always going somewhere with him. And it's there, along the way, that they learn.

Now remember, mentorship is good. But discipleship is great. That's why it's in the Great Commission.

- Grant Skeldon



## The Three Questions of Calling

By Todd Wilson

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." John 10:10

God's original script for mankind was a healthy, intimate, and eternal relationship with him. Before sin was introduced to the world, the Bible describes humanity as innocent, eternal, in direct communication and relationship with God, content and joyful in work, a caretaker or steward of God's provision, absent of negative emotions like shame and hurt, living comfortably without needs in a beautiful place, having childlike innocence (lacking God's knowledge and wisdom about good and evil), and having free-will choice to make decisions.

But sin tore up that script and left us bereft. Having lost our true identity, purpose, and place with the Father, we try desperately in all kinds of unhealthy ways to deal with the

separation and its resulting anxiety and pain. We see three key chasms or separations that result from our defiance and sin.

#### A LOSS OF IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP

Our core sense of being was altered, and our disconnection from God resulted in a fundamental shift in our understanding of identity. We were left with an identity crisis that wreaked havoc and produced unhealthy desires. Our relationship with him was severed and we became estranged. We were left confused and asking, “Who am I?”

#### A LOSS OF PURPOSE AND MISSION

Work became toil. The work of our hands in the garden was joyful and full of meaning and creativity. With the curse, our actions acquired a taint of frustration and futility that we hadn't known before. Instead of our activity flowing seamlessly from our life with God, it took a different turn. We lost the joy God intended us to experience in work. We were left confused and asking, “What should I do?”

#### A LOSS OF PLACE AND ETERNAL BLISS

We lost our place in Eden and were driven out into a hostile, uncaring world. We became captive to time and lost our eternity of bliss with God. The joy of the perfect environment gave way to an environment that was physically and spiritually hostile. We were left confused, asking, “Where do I fit?”

As a result of sin, man's contentment in God's original script gave way to an elusive pursuit of accumulating, conquering, and attaining things that will not see eternity. And in the meantime, Satan takes full advantage of our separation anxiety to hold us hostage to his lies. But the answer to these three questions will reveal our unique personal calling—a calling that puts the right script back into our lives with God at the center and also equips us to help others find their way back to God.

#### WHO AM I CREATED TO BE?

First, Satan twists the truth of our identity as God intends it. He tells us that we can be the kings of our own domains and that satisfying the desires of the moment is our right. Like the first temptation of Jesus (making stones into bread), Satan tries to convince us to take shortcuts to fulfill our hunger of the moment (Matthew 4:3).

#### WHAT AM I CREATED TO DO?

Second, Satan tells us that our purpose is tied to worldly success and notoriety. The picture of Christ leaping from the temple and miraculously being unharmed would have certainly gotten some attention (Matthew 4:6). But that amazing act would have been about attention to self and not about the love and kingdom of God.

#### WHERE AM I CREATED TO GO?

Finally, Satan tells us our best position is one of personal happiness and contentment. “You should leave your spouse for a better mate. You should leave that job for one that meets your needs more completely. Retire to an area where you can relax and enjoy yourself.” These seductive lies ultimately fuel additional discontent, for we are never satisfied.

The lies of Satan always work from the outside in. He promises change through success and bread to eat and power that we can see, feel, and touch. The very longing designed as a beacon to call us to God and eternal relationship with him becomes misused as a drive and motivation for conquering and pursuing our own immortality and legacy. Some will miss the eternity they seek altogether, while others will gain life but miss the more abundant life God intends.

What distinguishes us from one another is which script we choose to live by. As church leaders, we need to help each person in the church to discover their Ephesians 2:10 calling and be mobilized into his mission. Mobilizing every Christian into their calling is how we can actually see the church extend outside her walls and Kingdom multiplication happen in North America. So the question for us, and for every person in our churches, is, will we live by a script that we try to write ourselves, trying to please ourselves and quell our own pain and anxiety? Or will we trust the script that God writes for us, and will we humbly and gratefully follow him?

This reality is our focus at Exponential as we go into 2019, to see every Christian mobilized into their calling. To learn more and join the conversation, [visit our Made for More Resource Library](#) with several FREE resources including our latest eBook and Church Resource Kit.



## MILLENNIALS

ENOUGH STATISTICS.  
WE NEED SOLUTIONS.



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