

# Wittenberg 2017 As One Pattern for a Reconciliation Initiative

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## Introduction

George Miley has graciously granted permission to adapt his article “Development of a Work of God: Principles” from Ancient Wells for this paper. We will combine the principles that he outlines, with our experience in seeing the development of Wittenberg 2017. We hope that this proves useful to other reconciliation initiatives that God is and will be developing.

We have written this in a general way, so that it could serve the purposes of other initiatives. We do so with humility – not at all intending to communicate that this is the *only* way for such an initiative to develop. God is infinitely creative, and His works display a variety of methods and means.

Here is what we have seen God do in Wittenberg 2017:

- 1 – God Initiates the Ministry of Reconciliation
- 2 – God Chooses a Leader (or a couple)
- 3 – God Draws Others into the Vision
- 4 – God Creates an Intercessory Covering
- 5 – God Forms a Mutually Submitted Leadership Team
- 6 – God Faithfully Shepherds The Initiative Through Stages of Growth
- 7 – God Calls Forth Specific, Meaningful Actions of Reconciliation
- 8 – God Begins Other Works While Ending the Initiative

Notice that it is God who does the work! We just cooperate with Him, work alongside Him. The Father is “Our Father” (Matthew 6:9). Jesus is Christ the Reconciler (Col. 1:20,22; Eph. 2:14-18; Rom. 5:10). The Holy Spirit convicts, comforts, and unites (Eph. 4:3).

Your initiatives may not have all of these steps. Or they may not be in the same order. Don’t be legalistic or dogmatic about this. Don’t start a new denomination based on this paper! As Fr. Peter Hocken has said, the Holy Spirit is always coming up with new surprises ...

## 1 – God Initiates the Ministry of Reconciliation

- God actively initiates ministries of reconciliation – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- True works of God are not initiated by men, but by God – Exodus 3:4-10
- That which is of human origin will be an Ishmael – Genesis 17:17-18
  - It must go through deep purification and reorientation
  - Or else it will not be spiritually fruitful at best, damaging at worst
- God often (always?) provides prophetic signs to confirm that it is He who is initiating the work – see for example the many dreams, visions, and angelic visitations at when Jesus' life was initiated (Luke 1 & 2)
  - These prophetic signs are frequently not understood until after they have come to pass.
  - In this way, the fulfillment of these prophetic signs builds faith but does not remove the responsibility to live daily as an apprentice to Jesus.

## 2 – God Chooses a Leader

- God's initiating call comes to a person.
  - Persons who are apostolically gifted are designed by God to receive these types of callings, because they are naturally gifted to pioneer works of reconciliation
  - It is rare (and fraught with potential difficulties) when two or more persons are initiating co-leaders of a work of reconciliation
    - However, this was the case with Amy & Thomas for Wittenberg 2017, and their Catholic-Protestant marriage turned out to be a strength ... however, a strong bond of unity in their marriage was required, and was tested by God in 2003-2005
- The leader(s) will be personally invested in the specific area of reconciliation being addressed
  - Those bearing the pain of historical wounds seem natural candidates
    - For example, a black person in the US
  - However, often God surprises by choosing a person who can identify more with the cause of the historical wound ... one of the important roles of such a person is identificational repentance
    - For example, a white person whose ancestors kept slaves

- The leader(s) will have strengths.
  - Strengths common for apostolically gifted individuals are:
    - Faith that God has called them
    - Willingness to take risks
    - Ambition to break new ground
    - Skills to communicate vision effectively
    - Ability to enlist others to pursue the vision
- The leader(s) will have flaws.
  - Weaknesses common for apostolically gifted individuals are
    - Pride
    - Presumption
    - Impatience
    - Anger
    - Lack of Compassion
    - “Lone wolf” and/or “It all depends on me” mentalities
    - Compulsive and/or impulsive behavior
- The call will become for him or her a cross – 2 Corinthians 4:7-12
  - Aspects of embracing this cross can include:
    - Waiting for God’s timing
    - Submitting to Godly authority
    - Surrendering decision-making and other aspects of leadership to others with complementary gifts
    - Enduring insignificant beginnings and/or a perceived lack of external recognition or validation

### 3 – God Draws Others into the Vision

- A multi-gifted team begins to gather around the leader
  - God’s provision for the implementation of the calling – 1 Corinthians 12:14
  - *See Step 5 for more details*
- The leader is united with leaders outside the work
  - God’s provision for the leader’s need for counsel and covering – Galatians 2:1-2

## 4 – God Creates an Intercessory Covering

- We were alerted by the example of one highly significant, prophetic reconciliation initiative that started up with Godly leadership and a clearly stated vision.
- They began to act on this vision.
- There was no organized team of intercessors laboring to cover this initiative.
- They began to experience significant spiritual attack. The health of leaders and their immediate families was threatened, even to the point of death.
- They drew back and sought the Lord as to why they were open to attack.
- They heard that there was no prayer covering.
- God raised up leaders to coordinate intercessory prayer.
- God raised up intercessors to join the team.
- Today, this initiative is flourishing and remains one of the key reconciliation initiatives in the body of Christ.
- It is not important to have a large team of intercessors. It is important to have Godly, anointed leaders. And it is important that those who are on the team are called, committed and mature (since sensitive information is often shared with them, that must be kept confidential).

## 5 – God Forms a Mutually Submitted Leadership Team

### Responsibilities / Purpose of the Leadership Team

- The responsibilities of this team are:
  1. Hear God together
  2. Protect the initiative, particularly the initiating leader(s)
  3. Develop further leaders for this and future initiatives
- Regarding #1, hearing God together:
  - In the beginning especially, the "hearing God" role is expected to come through the founding / initiating leader(s)
  - But each "word" or "impression" or even "conviction" needs to be tested, confirmed, adjusted.
  - Here is a crucial function of the leadership team which the Holy Spirit forms around the initiating leader.
  - Over time, the entire team hears God more clearly together.

- Regarding #2, to *safeguard the unity of the initiative* is the guiding purpose of this leadership team through all of its activities.
  - The attack of the enemy against a reconciliation / unity initiative will primarily be against the unity of the leadership team.
  - This is why the leadership team should be concerned with guarding its own unity, more than with making strategic, logistical or organizational decisions – which are important, but secondarily so.
  - This is also why the formation of an intercessory covering is so important (see point #4 above).
- The decision making model used is:
  - We move forward when all are in agreement.
  - When all are not in agreement, we wait. We do not press for agreement (this can be a temptation especially of the initiating leader). We go together to God, asking for His wisdom. We do not move forward, until all are in agreement to do so. This can take significant amount of time, which requires a significant amount of patience and trust in each other.
- The leadership team is not a top-down, command-and-control structure. That leadership style is appropriate for many works of God. But for a work of reconciliation, the leadership team must live out reconciliation and unity. This requires mutual submission and mutual honor.
- This type of mutually-submitted leadership structure is more difficult to forge, and can take significantly more time – because it requires relationships of deep trust.

### Composition / Structure of the Leadership Team

- Be careful about who is invited to serve on this team, especially in the early days of the initiative – when it is tempting to add anybody who shows any interest! It can be painful to later “uninvited” someone who was not meant by God to serve in this role, but in a different role.
- As the team begins to form, all members of the team must hear together regarding who else to invite. Numbers aren’t important. Agreement is (see above regarding mutual submission).
- Complementary giftings should be represented in this team. However, nobody should be invited only to “represent” a certain gifting or “fill a gap.” The person is more important than the gifting. You can trust God to provide the right mix of giftings, over time.

- Especially critical are those giftings listed in Ephesians 4:
  - *Prophetic* giftings
    - God's order is for the prophetic to be affirmed, protected and released in submission with the apostolic. There is a special "foundation" of the apostolic and prophetic working together – Ephesians 2:20
    - The prophetic is to honor and submit to the apostolic; the apostolic is to honor and submit to the prophetic. Among other things, this develops Christ-like character, and the effective expression of the prophetic through testing of the word.
  - *Pastoral* giftings
  - *Evangelistic* giftings
  - The gift of *teaching*.
  - There should also be other *apostolic* giftings.
    - These play a crucial role of insight, wisdom and protection.
    - They must be mature enough to support, bless, and serve the initiating leader(s), not "re-initiating" or "counter-initiating."
- There must be strong ownership by the primary repenting group.
  - In Wittenberg 2017, the initiators were American and not Lutheran.
  - We sought confirmation from German Lutheran pastors that the initiative was God's idea and not ours – including Hans Wiedenmann and Hans Scholz.
  - We had significant German Lutherans on the leadership team – first Friedrich Aschoff, and then Henning Dobers.
  - There should not be widely unequal representation across the gap that the initiative of reconciliation is addressing.
    - For example, if it addresses racial divides in the US, the team should not be heavily composed of either whites or minorities.
    - However, great care must be taken in choosing who is on the team. There cannot be a "quota" system where a person is added to the team simply because that person "fills a hole".
- Pray for representation by at least one Messianic Jew.
  - Reach out to inform & involve Messianic Jews, even if the topic of reconciliation does not "seem" to be relevant to them.
  - The divide between Jew & Gentile was the first division in the church.
  - Messianic Jews hold important keys to reconciliation between other groups in the body of Christ.
  - And every chance to honor the Messianic Jews as our older brothers, should be pursued.

## 6 – God Faithfully Shepherds The Initiative Through Stages of Growth

- Insignificant beginnings
  - Hebrews 11:11-12
- Waiting on God's timing
  - Abraham did not wait for God's timing, and the result was Ishmael
  - David did not seize opportunities to take the kingship from Saul
  - Jesus repeatedly demonstrated an awareness of when it wasn't his time
  - Paul did not go through the open door of ministry, because Titus was not there – 2 Corinthians 2:12-13
- Growth
  - Because there is life, there is growth.
  - At first it is largely unseen. It is happening in people – Galatians 1:15-17
    - This is one important purpose of waiting on God's timing ... only God knows when the inner life is sufficiently formed
  - As individuals mature, growth assumes visible forms – Acts 14:26-27
- Weakness
  - As the work develops, weaknesses increasingly appear.
  - Leaders and people are limited – 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:9-13
  - Character has not yet matured into Christlikeness – Philippians 3:8, 10
  - The cross becomes increasingly incarnated in the initiative's DNA.
  - Faith becomes the settled response – 2 Corinthians 11:23-30
- Spiritual opposition
  - The more fruitful the work, the more evil will oppose.
  - Attacks from without – Acts 20:29
  - Attacks from within – Acts 20:30
- Increasing fruit
  - In God's ways and timing
  - The work remains vulnerable – fragile – 2 Timothy 4:14-18
  - That no flesh may glory – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

## 7 – God Calls Forth Specific, Meaningful Actions of Reconciliation

- Some important actions of reconciliation are ...
  - Prayer
  - Research
  - Pilgrimage – go towards the pain
  - Honoring
  - Listening
  - Lament / Grieving
  - Repentance
  - Forgiveness
  - Restitution – making it right
  - Celebration
- The leadership *team* (not just the leader!) must hear the Holy Spirit *together* regarding
  - What action to take
  - When & where to take action
  - Who to involve (the right people are more important than a large number of participants)

## 8 – God Begins Other Works While Ending the Initiative

- The initiative's ending is as important as its beginning
  - The power of many initiatives has been diminished, because they didn't end when God had finished His work.
  - Leaders naturally want to build on momentum. Organizations that have been constructed have inertia that can be difficult to stop.
  - But the key ingredient is God's anointing. If that is lifted, the movement will get more and more difficult, until it (at best) simply peters away, or (at worst) self-destructs, damaging many people.
- John 17:4 – “I have completed the work you gave me to do”
  - God only calls us to completeable tasks
- John 12:24 – “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”
  - A Godly ending of one initiative gives birth in the Spirit to numerous new initiatives