

Tribe - Quarter 4 / Week 1 - Initiative and Hospitality

Themes:

- Leading with thought and action
- Understanding the the power of hospitality for building trust and opening relationships

- 9AM (15 mins) - Welcome; check-in; read Psalms 127-128, 133; PRAY
- 9:15 (10 mins):
 - Introduction to Q4: Leading others (serving them, knowing them, communicating with them, building consensus, stewarding their gifts, keeping the peace, casting vision, leading them to Christ)
 - Brief review of syllabus and upcoming events
 - Brief review of required and optional reading for the quarter
- 9:25 (to the end)
 - **Initiative:**
 - This is a topic that is widely discussed in America; initiative is an American virtue for individuals. It is often discussed in leadership development trainings, seminars, books, etc. “Be the first one out there” is the message in America. Indeed, many in America have made fortunes by being first to launch an idea.
 - Taking initiative is not inherently spiritual. It is a function of desire, thought, and will. A person who has strong desires, clear thoughts, and a decisive will will be able to take initiative powerfully. Animals also take initiative.
 - **What makes initiative Godly is the goal, the focus, the vision, the purpose of the initiative.**
 - **Wim’s definition¹ of initiative:** *Initiative* is the willingness to move toward a vision and act on an idea at the right time.
 - Google includes “independence” and “preemption” in the definition. I do not use those words in mine because Christian initiative should never be independent of Christ and should not seek a competitive advantage over others for personal gain. With those things in mind, initiative can take place independently of other humans and can include acting before others are willing to act.
 - Barriers to initiative:
 - Fear of loss (of reputation, possessions, relationships, etc.) or injury
 - Lack of support from others
 - Belief that initiative itself is bad, domineering, subversive, rebellious, etc.
 - Others?
 - When God empowers His children with gifts, He expects us to use them. When we use them, God multiplies our efforts and draws others into the movement of His Spirit through us. Godly initiative creates Kingdom contagion.

¹ Google (from Oxford languages dictionary): “the ability to assess and initiate things independently”; “the power or opportunity to act or take charge before others do.”

- Initiative should include seeking to build consensus with others, asking God to provide support, prayer, faith, action. He will provide all that you need; His provision may not come from places that you expect.
- Initiative process:
 - **Take inventory of what you have** (time, talents, energy, knowledge, experience, relationships, resources)
 - **Take inventory of the opportunities around you;** what opportunities for ministry are there around you which may line up with what you have to offer?
 - **Pray and seek God's favor and direction;** ask God to confirm where He wants you to take initiative and to remove ungodly motivations within you.
 - **Seek the favor and support of others;** with discretion, share what is on your heart with people around you.
 - **Act based on God's confirmation in your heart.**
- Bible (look for elements of the initiative process above in the passages below) (will only read bolded passages):
 - **Nehemiah 1-2 (the vision, passion, and support of Nehemiah)**
 - **Matthew 25:14-30 (Initiative includes stewardship of gifts and resources)**
 - **Luke 10:1-12 (Initiative can include staying, leaving, and speaking, all by faith)**
 - Acts 17:16-34 (Paul takes initiative in Athens)
 - Luke 4:31-32,42-44 (Jesus spoke and acted purposefully and courageously)
 - **Philemon (Initiative includes saying hard things; burdening a relationship for the sake of love, truth, and justice)**
 - Romans 12:3-8 (different gifts given, to be used accordingly)
 - I Peter 4:10-11 (same message)
 - **Proverbs 4:23-27 (put spiritual blinders on your heart)**
- Questions:
 - Without mentioning names, can you think of a time when you have observed a leader take initiative in an unhealthy way? What about a healthy way? What were the effects of these actions?
 - Can you think of a time when you hoped for and expected a leader to take initiative and they didn't?
 - What about in your own life and leadership?
- **Hospitality:**
 - There is great power in hospitality, particularly hospitality in your own home. Your home is usually the place of your deepest thoughts, desires, secrets, possessions, and relationships. Opening your home to others is a clear and moving sign of your vulnerability, transparency², generosity, trustworthiness, and love.

² Hospitality is not a guarantee of transparency; it is possible to hide and deceive even with hospitality. However, it is harder to do so when you open your home to others, and it is much easier to build trust through hospitality.

- In nearly all other cultures in the world, hospitality is practiced with greater care, more time, more prioritization, and more cost than in America. Take note of the hospitality of Afghans, Arabs, Southeast Asians. The depth of hospitality is remarkable in those cultures, and it is extremely powerful for bringing relationships close.
- In most other cultures, eating a large meal together is a prerequisite for serious conversation, which takes place at the end of the meal (Queen Esther gave two feasts before she shared her heart with the king and Haman). Wim's experience in EY Japan, EY Mexico (with special floors of the office dedicated to hospitality), etc.
- Hospitality is universal; if you invest the time in hospitality in your ministry even in America, it will have a powerful positive effect on your relationships and ministry.
- Bible (read only the bolded passages):
 - Genesis 18:1-8 (hospitality of Abraham)
 - Judges 6:17-21 (hospitality of Gideon)
 - **Isaiah 58 (offering hospitality to the poor is a sign of authentic generosity and Godliness)**
 - **Luke 14:12-24 (offering hospitality with no ulterior motive)**
 - **Luke 10:8 (receiving hospitality as a minister)**
 - I Corinthians 10:27 (same message)
 - Romans 12:13 (exhortation)
 - Hebrews 13:1-2 (exhortation)
 - **I Peter 4:8-9 (exhortation; hospitality within the church)**
 - **I Timothy 3:2-3 (prerequisite for ministry leadership)**
 - Titus 1:7-8 (prerequisite for ministry leadership)
- Questions:
 - Can you think of a time when someone showed hospitality in a meaningful and powerful way?
 - Can you think of a time when hospitality was lacking?
 - What did you observe and experience from these situations?
 - What about in your own life?
- Takeaway questions:
 - Where is God asking me to take initiative?
 - What are barriers to hospitality in my life?
 - How can I remove the barriers to increase hospitality?
- 11:50 Homework summary / close in prayer (10 mins)
 - Reflect on the takeaway questions above.
 - Read Introduction, Part 1, and Part 2 of Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*
 - Decide which optional book you'd like to read for Q4; reading an optional book is not required

Tribe - Quarter 4 / Week 3 - Understanding, Listening, and Communicating

Themes:

- Being slow to speak and quick to listen
- How and when to communicate with people you are leading

- 9AM (15 mins) - Welcome; check-in; PRAY
- 9:15 (10 mins):
 - Introduction to Q4: Leading others (serving them, knowing them, communicating with them, building consensus, stewarding their gifts, keeping the peace, casting vision, leading them to Christ)
- 9:25 (to the end)
 - **Understanding:**
 - Probably the single most painful experience for me in life is being misunderstood by people that I expect to understand me (who I believe are supposed to understand me). This experience has caused me to think deeply about my pain and longing to be understood. Where does it come from? Why do I feel so deeply about this? Why is it so difficult to be understood?
 - Understanding is a very complex concept.
 - Understanding ideas is one thing
 - Understanding reality is another thing
 - Understanding people is another thing
 - All of these are important for leaders to grasp
 - Understanding comes from consciousness and from truth. Understanding requires revelation by another person (whether God or another person) and awareness / attentiveness by oneself.
 - Understanding a person requires observation (seeing, watching), listening (hearing), and reflecting (considering, processing) on what has been seen and heard
 - Understanding a person can be one of the deepest ways that you can love them, bringing healing, solidarity, and the peace of God.
 - Understanding comes from God; it is a gift given (or withheld) by God.
 - **For leaders, the goal of understanding ideas, reality, and people is to deepen one's effectiveness in bringing *glory to God* in one's leadership of *people*.**
 - Bible:
 - **Exodus 2:23-25 (God understands)**
 - Deuteronomy 4:5-6 (the law of God brings understanding)
 - I Kings 3:9 (Solomon asked God for an understanding mind)
 - Job 16:1-4 (Job rails against friends who have no understanding)
 - Proverbs 2:1-15 (search for understanding with all your might; God will give it!)
 - Many other proverbs
 - **Proverbs 3:5-6 (do not trust ultimately in your own understanding!)**
 - **Proverbs 17:10 (understanding people receive rebukes)**
 - Proverbs 19:25 (same)
 - **Philippians 4:6-7 (peace is deeper than understanding)**
 - **I Peter 3:7 (leaders live with others in an understanding way)**
 - Questions:
 - Describe a time when you were blessed by a person of understanding?
 - Have you experienced the pain of being misunderstood?

○ **Listening:**

- “The first service one owes to others in a community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God’s Word, the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them. God’s love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives God’s Word, but also lends us God’s ear. We do God’s work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them. So often Christians, especially preachers, think that their only service is always to have to ‘offer’ something when they are together with other people. They forget that listening can be a greater service...Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either.” - Bonhoeffer, from *Life Together*
- Listening requires devotion of attention. It is greatly helped with appropriate eye contact and body posture, honoring the other person’s communication.
- The same listening which is required to bless others is also required to receive Godly counsel and advice. Listening to Godly authority is as much a way to bring blessing as listening to the cries of a suffering person.
- Wellspring group: BLESS skills:
 - Be fully present
 - Listen in 4 directions (the other person, your own heart, God’s heart, and the heart of evil)
 - Effectively ask questions
 - Share from your heart
 - Savor the moment
- Bible:
 - **Proverbs 20:5 (a person of understanding listens and brings clarity)**
 - **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 (let your words be few)**
 - **James 1:19-20 (slow to speak; quick to hear)**
 - Proverbs 12:15; 13:1, 15:31-32, 17:4, 19:20, 23:22 (listen to rebukes, counsel, and words from those who are wise and are in Godly authority over you, and you will be blessed)
- Questions:
 - Describe a time when you were blessed by a good listener?
 - Have you experienced the pain of not being heard?
 - Have you observed those who did and didn’t listen to authority?
 - What are the barriers in your daily life to effective listening?

- **Communicating:**
 - Remember, when we defined “the word of the Lord,” we said it was “the thoughtful and meaningful intentions of God, decisively revealed to humans using words for us to receive, understand, consider, treasure, follow, and obey.” **The goal for personal verbal communication, both between God and humans and, separately, among humans, is to give and receive the thoughtful and meaningful intentions of one another, revealed using words (and supplemented by non-verbal communication) which are meant to be received, understood, and considered.**
 - “Speaking past each other” is not effective personal verbal communication. There is a barrier which causes the communication not to be effective.
 - In verbal communication, these dynamics occur:
 - Words with meaning are shared
 - Other meaning exists in the mind of the communicator but is not shared with the hearer, whether intentionally or unintentionally
 - The words with meaning are received and interpreted by the hearer
 - Other meaning (whether real or not), not shared by the communicator but inferred by the hearer, is understood by the hearer
 - For effective personal verbal communication, these things must be in place:
 - The communicator should know that the hearer is listening.
 - The communicator should choose his / her words carefully, with pathos (emotion and feeling) that is appropriate for the words.
 - The communicator should watch for signs of understanding or misunderstanding.
 - The communicator should ask for responses which indicate understanding.
 - The listener should be ready to listen.
 - The listener should demonstrate that he / she is listening.
 - The listener should respond verbally / non-verbally.
 - Prior to communication, the communicator and the listener should work to remove all barriers to communication (external / environmental factors, personal offenses, distractions, time constraints, etc.)
 - **Silence can speak louder than words.**
 - **Written words can be powerfully effective as an alternative or complement to spoken words, but take great care to consider how *best* to communicate from the *listener’s* point of view (rather than from your own point of view).**
 - Bible:
 - **Proverbs 10:19-21 (word have power for good or evil)**
 - Ecclesiastes 3:7 (there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence)
 - **James 3 (words have great power)**
 - Psalm 12 (deceitful words vs. the words of the Lord)
 - **2 Corinthians 6:3-13 (Paul goes to great lengths to communicate effectively)**
 - **Wim’s communication resolution: I want to speak the *truth* with *clarity* at the right *time* in the right *manner*.**
 - Questions:
 - Do you have an experience of effective communication?
 - Think of another experience of ineffective communication; what went wrong? What could have been done differently?
- Takeaway questions:
 - See questions above, within each section (understanding, listening, communicating)
- 11:50 Homework summary / close in prayer (10 mins)
 - Reflect on the takeaway questions above.
 - Do a word search in your Bible for the words “understanding,” “listen,” and “speech.”
 - Read Parts 3 through 5 of Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*
 - Begin your Q4 reflection writing assignment: In 2,000 to 3,000 words, summarize the following:
 - Your thoughts about the top three strengths and top three weaknesses of the cultural and social norms that formed you
 - The resolutions that you need to help you display the love and glory of Jesus in the words others hear you speak and the actions others see you do
 - Decide which optional book you’d like to read for Q4; reading an optional book is not required

Tribe - Quarter 4 / Week 4 - Agreement and Mutual Submission

Themes:

- The power of agreement in a group
- Being quick to agree and slow to disagree
- Seeking and building agreement through mutual submission
- Learning how and when to defer to others
- Being quick to follow
- Welcoming the feedback and ideas of others
- Maintaining openness in leadership

- 9AM (15 mins) - Welcome; check-in; read John 13:1-17, 34-35; PRAY
- 9:15 (10 mins):
 - Q4 reminders (calendar and to dos)
- 9:25 (to the end): **Agreement and Mutual Submission:**
 - **Introduction:**
 - One of the most controversial things I have written about and taught about is the idea that Christians must agree with one another. I have had more questions, comments, grimaces, and disagreements that have arisen from my words than just about anything else I have said or taught about. This doesn't necessarily mean I've said anything wrong or untrue (although it might), but it definitely means that my words have touched a nerve, and it definitely means that I need to pay close attention to the things people are saying in response to my words so that I can understand their thoughts and feelings, clarify what I've said (if needed), correct what I've said (if needed), and repeat what I've said (if needed).
 - I do not like causing offense. I go to great lengths to avoid causing offense. I'm in good company there, because the apostle Paul also went out of his way to avoid causing offense. However, truth itself is offensive, and I definitely do not want to shy away from speaking the truth. I will let God and you be the judges of whether what I say is true.
 - I feel strongly about agreement only because the Bible speaks simply, clearly, and directly about it. Of course, my challenge, and the challenge for all of us, is to seek to understand what the Bible is saying about agreement and what it is *not* saying....
 - I do *not* want to decide what I believe only because it is true in my experience, because my experience is not infinite, all-seeing, or all-knowing. I only want to believe something is true first because the Bible says it and then because I see it borne out in my own experience or those of others. Faith requires us to believe what we have received in the Bible even if we have not seen it in our own experiences, trusting that *in time* we will see it. **True faith always leads to true sight; true faith is always temporary; one day true faith will no longer be necessary.**
 - **Definitions:**
 - **Agreement (Wim's definition)¹:** Agreement is saying and deciding the same things. It is enabled by love and trust and empowered by humility and submission. It does not require equivalent understanding or insight, though those should be sought for by prayer, patient listening, and gentle communication. God is the one who provides and withholds agreement, but His heart is always for us to seek agreement, even if He sometimes does not bring it to completion. It is possible to stay unified without agreement.
 - **Mutual submission (Wim's definition):** Mutual submission is a posture of respect and deferral which exists between two or more people. This posture is characterized by an eagerness to understand the other's desires, feelings, motivations, thoughts, and choices. It is also characterized by a preference in oneself to choose the other person's choice rather than one's own choice, even if the other person's choice is not fully understood by oneself. The competition which exists in mutual submission is a competition to defer more than the other person defers, resulting in a magnification of love, trust, and honor.
 - **Bible:**
 - **Philippians 1:27–2:4**; Ephesians 5:21 (a picture of unity characterized by mutual submission)
 - **Romans 12:10** (holy competition in honoring one another)
 - **1 Corinthians 1:10**; Philippians 4:2-3; 2 Corinthians 13:11; (an unconditional exhortation to agree) (1 Corinthians 1-4 is a broader discussion about unity and agreement)
 - 1 Corinthians 13:4 (love does not insist on its own way)
 - **Matthew 18:19-20** (there is power in agreement)
 - Luke 22:24-30; Mark 9:35; 1 Corinthians 9:19 (the greatest among you must be the servant of all)
 - **James 1:19-20; James 3:17-18** (wisdom speaks slowly, listens eagerly, and considers the ideas of others with openness)

¹ This definition was given in week #8 of the first quarter of Tribe, in a discussion about unity and missions in the body of Christ.

- **Discussion:**
 - Human nature longs for agreement and is sensitive to disagreement. Immature human nature is unwilling to wait and do the hard work to build agreement, preferring instead to “cancel” those with whom there appears to be even the potential for disagreement. Conversely, the way of the Spirit of Christ welcomes those who may have other perspectives and gifts, seeking new insights, unafraid of new perspectives, and confident that the Holy Spirit will bring agreement where He wants to.
 - When the word “agree” or “agreement” is used in the Bible, it has to do with decisions and judgments about specific circumstances and situations, such as how to proceed on a certain specific decision. It is *not* used in the Bible to refer to theological doctrines or positions. The Bible does speak about the importance of sound doctrine, but the word “agree” is not used in those situations. So, when we think of agreement, we should think about aiming for deciding the same things in a situation.
 - Deciding the same thing is very difficult. We all **see** from a unique perspective, which makes agreement difficult and powerful (in contrast, disagreement is easy *and* can weaken relationships).
 - Disagreement can stop conversations, leaving them at an impasse. Rather than stopping communicating with one another, we should keep seeking to understand and listen to one another’s hearts, being rooted in God’s love and truth and unified in our commitment to Christ and to one another. We should ask the Holy Spirit to bring agreement and believe that He will, in time. We should wait on God *and* on one another.
 - At PLCF, the elders practice this. They do not vote about decisions. Instead, they wait on God and one another until all elders are willing to move forward with a decision. The elders do not have to feel passionately about a decision in order to move forward; they can still feel reluctant about it in order to move forward. The key is that they are *willing* to move forward based on their trust in God and in one another. This is the power of agreement.
 - **The power of agreement is enabled by the practice of mutual submission. Mutual submission is enabled by the virtue of meekness.** (James 1:21 and 3:13) It is hard to insist on one’s own way when the other person is being meek.
 - God has continually whispered in my ears during my moments of frustration with authority: “Submission is a safe place.”
 - The dynamics of agreement and mutual submission can be complicated when dominant and submissive personalities work together. Often the greatest fruit will come when the dominant person learns to be led and when the submissive person learns to be more assertive. The reason for this is that God’s strength, which is perfected in the weaknesses of humans, shows up powerfully when we are willing to expose our weaknesses out of love for others and for God.
- **Questions:**
 - Where have you seen mutual submission modeled well?
 - Where have you seen it absent or modeled poorly?
 - What is your experience with agreement and disagreement?
- 11:50 Homework summary / close in prayer (10 mins)
 - Reflect on the questions above.
 - Pay the fee for Q4 for Tribe and for earlier quarters if you are not caught up: <https://www.aplos.com/aws/give/CityChurchofWoodbine/tribe>
 - Do a word search in your Bible for the words “agreement,” “mutual,” and “submission.”
 - Continue your Q4 reflection writing assignment: In 2,000 to 3,000 words, summarize the following:
 - Your thoughts about the top three strengths and top three weaknesses of the cultural and social norms that formed you
 - The resolutions that you need to help you display the love and glory of Jesus in the words others hear you speak and the actions others see you do
 - Begin reading your optional book for Q4; reading an optional book is not required

Tribe - Quarter 4 / Week 5 - Offense Dynamics and Unconditional Forgiveness

Themes:

- Understanding my own propensity to take offense
- Understanding offense in other personalities and cultures
- Overlooking offense
- The nature and extent of real forgiveness
- Learning to seek peace in relationships

- 9AM (15 mins) - Welcome; check-in
- 9:15 (10 mins):
 - Q4 reminders (calendar and to dos)
 - Investing the accumulated funds for tribe: \$4,000
- 9:25 (to the end): **Introduction to offense and forgiveness**
 - Personal offense is one of the primary ways Satan seeks to disrupt relationships in the world and accomplish his purposes.
 - Offense can be caused by misunderstanding, by unintentional oversights, or by intentional harm.
 - It can only be overcome through a commitment to maintain the relationship and a willingness to forgive offenses unconditionally. This is particularly difficult when the offense is not understood by the other party.
 - **The stakes are extremely high for the witness of the Gospel in the ways we treat each other. Jesus said the world will know we are children of God by how we treat each other, by our love for each other. If we do not love each other but rather treat each other like the world does, we have no witness or message. The world should *not* listen to us in that case.**
 - **Definitions (Wim's definitions):**
 - **Offense:** The feeling of personal hurt and harm which arises from a personal expectation for honor, favor, generosity, or good which is not met.
 - **Forgiveness:** The willingness to release the feelings of resentment which were caused by an offense; in addition, the willingness to not cause any reciprocal offense to the offending party.
 - **Unconditional:** Done or given without prerequisite, condition, or qualification.
 - **Bible:**
 - **2 Samuel 16:5-14; 19:16-23** (David humbly overlooks and forgives stunning offense from Shimei)
 - Isaiah 42:2, 53:7 (Jesus was led like a lamb to slaughter but didn't even open his mouth in protest)
 - Matthew 26:63, 27:11-14 (Jesus is completely silent before the accusatory and mocking priests and officials and also before Pilate)
 - Proverbs 18:19 (the hardness of an offended man)
 - Proverbs 19:11 (the glory of overlooking offense)
 - James 1:19-20 (slow to become angry, slow to speak, quick to listen)
 - I Corinthians 13:4-7 (love is slow to become angry and does not keep a record of wrongs)
 - 1 Peter 2:23 and 4:12-19 (God's people entrust themselves to Him as they endure suffering patiently)
 - **1 Peter 4:8** (lover covers a multitude of sin)
 - Ephesians 4:25-32 (how to treat each other in the church)
 - Colossians 3:12-13 (we must bear with one another and forgive as we have been forgiven)
 - Matthew 6:14-15 (if we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven by God)
 - **Matthew 18:15-35** (dealing with offenses within the body of Christ)

- **Discussion:**
 - Offense is universal, but some of the things which cause offense shift and change as cultures shift and change. Our generation is / is not offended by the same things *previous generations* were offended by; our culture is / is not offended by the same things *other cultures* are offended by.
 - It is essential for personal character and spiritual formation to identify what causes offense within us so that we can be prepared to overlook offense
 - It is critically important to understand (through observation, time spent, listening, etc.) what causes offense in others in order to avoid giving offense.
 - Our culture is currently extremely quick to take offense. Taking offense is almost seen as virtuous. Even worse, the things which people take offense about are small and have to do with personal preference rather than real infractions of justice and real oppression. We must avoid being like the culture in being quick to be offended, and we must not give in to fear of offending. The truth is sometimes offensive...
 - Offense disrupts one's ability to think clearly and to function effectively with others. It is blinding. Tragically, this has a deep and pervasive impact on how ministry teams function. Team conflict is one of the leading reasons ministers leave ministry positions.
 - Forbearance and longsuffering are necessary for being steadfast in overlooking offense.
 - Forgiveness is different from reconciliation; forgiveness is possible without reconciliation; however, real *forgiveness requires a willingness to be reconciled*; defining reconciliation is important
 - Defensive posture we should adopt:
 - Slowness to take offense
 - Quickness to listen
 - Eagerness to overlook offense
 - Resolution to forgive unconditionally
 - Nurturing peaceful relationships
- **Questions:**
 - What causes me to become offended?
 - What happens within me when I am offended?
 - What gave David + Jesus the internal quietness to withstand the offenses hurled at him?
 - What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
 - How can I know when to forbear and when to act?
 - Share a time when you were offended or caused offense and it disrupted a relationship.
 - Share a time when God protected you from losing a relationship due to offense.
- 11:50 Homework summary / close in prayer (10 mins)
 - Reflect on the questions above.
 - Pay the fee for Q4 for Tribe and for earlier quarters if you are not caught up: <https://www.aplos.com/aws/give/CityChurchofWoodbine/tribe>
 - Do a word search in your Bible for "offend," "offense," and "forgive."
 - Continue your Q4 reflection writing assignment: In 2,000 to 3,000 words, summarize the following:
 - Your thoughts about the top three strengths and top three weaknesses of the cultural and social norms that formed you
 - The resolutions that you need to help you display the love and glory of Jesus in the words others hear you speak and the actions others see you do
 - Continue reading your optional book for Q4; reading an optional book is not required