

## **GOOD TO GREAT 2**

### **“FIRST WHO... THEN WHAT”**

*“If any of you wants to be My follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow Me.” Luke 9:23*

Last week we began this new series based on the book by Jim Collins, entitled; Good To Great. The book is a study of 7 common principles that Collins discovered existent in 11 major companies that made a significant shift from being good companies, to becoming great companies, and sustaining that greatness for a period of 15 years. My hope is that these principles might inspire us to think differently about the life of our church, and the business we conduct in the name of Jesus. I have no grand illusion that considering these principles for 7 weeks will create a revival, or even mark a dramatic shift in direction at First Church. I just hope we might begin to think more clearly about who God is, and maybe, think differently about who we are as God’s church.

Last week we looked at the paradoxical nature of what Collins calls Level 5 Leadership and discovered that a unique combination of Personal Humility and Professional Will marked each of the leaders and leadership teams that made up the G2G companies. We went on to see in the life of Jesus, the origination of Level 5 leadership as he humbly washed his disciples feet, and resolutely set his face toward his destiny, dying on a cross outside Jerusalem.

Today we consider the second principle and it is equally intriguing, but somewhat more difficult as we’ll discover in a few minutes. The principle of “First Who... Then What”, has primarily to do with the personal nature of conducting impersonal business. It has ultimately to do with the fact that God created us to be relational people. It’s the whole reason God created Adam, God wanted to be in relationship with someone like himself, so he created human beings. God saw that Adam was lonely and created Eve; a microcosm of the enduring process of relating. It’s all about who, not just what!

Just as last week we discovered the Level 5 Leaders were not the flash in the pan, super hero, CEO types; today we are about to discover that G2G leaders won't begin the transformation process by setting new visions, or developing new strategies, or charting new courses, but each of the 11 companies began by enlisting and engaging the right people. Remember it's all about relationship.

Collins defines 'First Who...Then What' like this: "What we found instead of casting new visions was that each of these companies first got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats on the bus – and **then** they figured out where to drive it. It doesn't really matter what your business goal is, the only way to achieve it is with the right people. The old adage "People are your most important asset" turns out to be wrong. People are not your most important asset. The right people are!"

**There are three questions I want to try to explore in relation to this principle:**

**1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON THE CHURCH BUS?**

*"Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called the ones he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. Then he selected twelve of them to be his regular companions, calling them apostles. He sent them out to preach, and he gave them authority to cast out demons." Mk 3: 13-15*

In Luke's account of this same story he adds that Jesus went to the mountains to pray, and he prayed all night, then the next morning he selected 12 out of all the disciples, 12, to become apostles. Obviously, getting the right apostles was a high priority for Jesus...still is!

The "First Who...Then What" principle is all about insuring that the people in your organization, business, company, or church, are on the bus for the right reason, and believe me this is as critical for the church as for any business. Certainly it applies to making sure that you hire good people to provide leadership, good staff people well qualified, but well 'charactered' too

I saw an interview on 60 minutes (yes, I still watch CBS sometimes) a few weeks ago as they reported about the amazing story of Goggle. This Internet search engine company of 3000+ employees, is owned by two 30 year olds each worth an estimated 6 Billion dollars. The company hires 25 new employees each month, but gets over 1000 new applications each week. They normally spend anywhere from 2 to 6 months making sure the person is a fit, before offering them a job. Collins would call that being rigorous, but not ruthless, when it comes to hiring.

It's not hard to see how this applies to a church hiring a pastor, or hiring new staff members. But how do we consider this principle for lay people riding the church bus? Can we be selective who gets on our bus? No, Jesus said all are welcome on HIS bus. Can we discriminate who wants to ride along? No, Jesus compelled his Disciple/Apostles to go out into the highways and byways and 'compel' the lost and downtrodden to come in. Can we choose whom we let on, and whom we don't? No, I don't think so.

Getting the right people on the bus doesn't mean that we selectively choose only those who are Methodist, or even Christian, or those who are over 35, or who are tithers, or those who have their spiritual act all together. No, our bus is big enough to include all kinds of people who want to know God, even those who don't know they need God.

The distinguishing mark comes when those who have been riders, want to become drivers! Here is where we must be discriminating. Here is where Jesus spent all night praying. Those people who wish to 'serve' in leadership must be seekers after God, yes; but they must also be held to a higher standard.

They must be willing to become Level 5 Leaders, doing the hard work of leadership, taking the inevitable flack that comes with it, and doing so with a Jesus inspired foot-washing attitude.

They must treasure each person on the bus, (its all about relationships) but relish the adventure of driving the bus, sometimes where those people just riding, don't even want to go!

## 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GET THE **WRONG** PEOPLE OFF THE CHURCH BUS?

*“As they were walking along someone said to Jesus, ‘I will follow you no matter where you go.’ But Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have no home of my own, not even a place to lay my head.’ He said to another person, ‘Come, be my disciple.’ The man agreed, but he said, ‘Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.’ Jesus replied, ‘Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead. Your duty is to go and preach the coming of the Kingdom of God.’ Another said, ‘Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.” Lk 9: 57-62*

I had a hard time writing the above section, some of you might have a hard time hearing this one. We in the United Methodist Church don't 'kick' people off the bus. Our denominational structure has no system of church discipline, or at least not one we exercise very often, and few of us follow the Biblical instructions for dealing with wayward members of the flock. So, if building a great church requires the right people on and the wrong people off the bus, how do we do that? I can think of only two answers;

1) you define the **culture** of the bus, and,

2) you determine the **direction** the bus will take to reach it's destination;

and then you leave it to each person to intentionally decide if that's what they are called to be a part of.

The scripture we just read makes it very clear that many people, even some who closely followed Jesus, gave up and went another direction. Even one of the 'prayed over all night' apostles made a decision to go a different direction. I'm not trying to say that leaving a bus or church is a matter of betraying or denying Jesus, but it needs to be done with good intention, not just unfulfilled personal preferences.

Every one of us, including myself, must determine if our presence in this church is a fulfillment of where God wants us right now. We can't cling to the hope that because my grandfather built this church, it will always stay the way it was when he built it like a museum to his legacy. Even some of you who have come to this church in the last 2-3 years, can not assume the church will remain the way it was when you arrived. The culture of any organization must change to follow the will of the One who created that organization, and to meet the needs of the people that Creator is trying to reach; it's that new wine in old wineskins story again. Not all those changes will be successful, at least the ones us humans are involved in, (note the New Coke fiasco), but they must continue to be tried. As we'll see in a minute, our destination is pretty much determined, but how we reach it needs to be flexible enough to be effective. We cannot continue to do what we have always done, and expect different results, even what we did 5 years ago, or shutter the thought, 5 months ago. IF all you ever do, is all you've ever done; then all you'll ever be is all you've ever been. That's a mouth full!

I don't mean to be crass or mean, but each of us has to answer the question; why am I here? Is this the right bus for me? If none of the 3 different styles of worship currently offered here meets a need for you, that's ok, maybe you can find it somewhere else. If the culture of disciple making through intentional outreach and invitation is not your cup of tea, be honest about that. If using children and youth to reach parents and grandparents, doesn't fit your church paradigm, it's ok. IF you don't like the people on the bus with you, don't expect them to change, or the buses culture to change. If you don't like the direction the bus is going to reach it's destination, that's ok, your opinion is valuable, but each of our opinions must line up with the accepted mission, and approved vision that the greater bus group has determined to be God's will for our bus, at this time.

Please try to hear my heart. I'm not asking or expecting any of you to leave, but if your unhappiness quotient is unusually high, maybe God is trying to say something to you. The third question of "First Who...Then What"

### **3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT OUR CHURCH BUS DESTINATION HAS ALREADY BEEN DETERMINED?**

*"Jesus came and told his disciples, 'I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28: 19-20*

Collins makes a hard to argue with point that companies wanting to be good must be initially more concerned with getting the right people on the bus and the wrong ones off, before we embark on what we are going to do. He says that with the right people, they will figure out where to drive the bus to become successful. That is all well and good, but for us in the church we have to take a step back.

I believe in the right people, but our destination has already been laid out for us in the verses mentioned already. We as a church have no choice, no discussion, no debate, no input, no recommendation when it comes to the ultimate Purpose of the Church; we exist to make disciples. There may be 1000 different ways you might try to explain what that means, but it means only one thing: Those who follow Jesus exist in this world to help those who don't follow Jesus, to become followers of Jesus.

That being said, the question we do get to answer, after we get the right people on and wrong ones off, (remember it's all about relationship)...is, how shall we make disciples? How shall the disciples of FUMC make more disciples, not of FUMC, but of Jesus? The answer to that question is laid out in the mission statement we adopted some 7 years ago now. Maybe it's time to rework it, reconsider it, renew it, but for now we continue to function under those priorities. The FUMC bus's destination is making disciples, and the way we are going to do that is by encountering God, loving each other, deepening our lives, reaching our neighbors, and serving God's world.

In conclusion let me state for the record that adherence to this idea of “First Who... Then What”, even though our ‘what’ has pretty much been predetermined; might provide the closest linkage possible between building a great company (church) and building a great life. For no matter what we achieve, if we don’t spend the vast majority of our time with people we love and respect, we cannot possibly have a great life. But if we do spend the vast majority of our time with people we love and respect – people we really enjoy being on the bus with, people who don’t intentionally try to disappoint us – then we will almost certainly have a great life, no matter how the bus gets to it’s destination. The people interviewed from the g2g companies clearly loved what they did, largely because they loved whom they did it with. Remember, it’s all about relationships: God with us, and us with each other, and all of us with the world. AMEN

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Remember, it’s all about relationships:

God with \_\_\_\_\_, and us with \_\_\_\_\_, and all of us with the \_\_\_\_\_.