

21 in 21: Twenty Somethings in 21st Century Mission
Co-Sponsored by the Global Learning Center and Intersect
Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

A Rough Sketch in Notes
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Wednesday, February 6, 2008

GRTS Chapel:

Dr. Bill Taylor, “Reflections on a Pair of Running Shoes”

- Bill Taylor with friends, listening, discerning, mulling, being, deciding...
 - o Key issue is how do we see the world?
 - o What do we learn from the world in new places?
- I come as A learner, a pilgrim, a man on a journey committed to my communities
 - o I am a globalized evangelical. I would like to redeem the word Christian. I am a pilgrim, a global pilgrim. I don't want to be a solitary monk who walks the road by myself, but I want to walk in community because of the very nature of the Divine community. My communities start with my wife, my family. I am a global Christian. I am a learner from my young friends. In the studies of longevity, it is important to hang out with young people who long to be missional. I belong to a small Anglican church in the city of Austin, Texas.
- I come as ... a married man, still passionately in love with my wife - my artist/pianist, my seer/mystic, my resident spiritual director, my friend and lover.
 - o Today, I'm missing being here I come as a married man. Get a life. If life isn't about my wife than what is it about anyway?
- I come as ... a man with a lot of schooling, but knowing that life and the sovereign God have taught me more in the non-formal school of life
 - o Thought he would spend the rest of his life at TEDS. Left TEDS for the sake of the family. For Bill it was fitting, but not for the rest of his family. But it's in the last 20 years that the sovereign God has taught me more through non-formal education.
- I come as ... a wounded man, en route, God willing, to becoming a sage. I want to be a son of Issachar.
 - o The sage in the Scriptures is the grey-haired man. I want to be a sage. I've been wounded by my own sins, and I've been wounded by others. My first term on the mission field, I thought I would serve with a particular co-missionary for the rest of my life. That person turned out to be a toxic leader. I planned to die in Guatemala

my whole life, but God had other plans. My wife was wounded. She was accepted at a prestigious conservatory of music, but her father did not support her pursuit. None of my in-law children have come from integrated families, so my wife and I have been re-parenting for the last 15 years. How does God want me to live in this period.

Leadership Roundtable: A Conversation for Ministry Leaders

Dr. Bill Taylor, “A Personal Survey of the Land: Issues I discern, and surely you see more and differently”

- Questions about Bill’s chapel presentation:
 - o How do you keep fresh in your spiritual journey, especially as a 3rd culture child?
 - We must honestly, openly de-mythologize our past experiences. We must expose our experiences and our wounds for what they are. As you open yourself up to the spiritual journey, “God what do you want to teach me here in this stage of life?”
- Articles
 - o Christopher J.H. Wright, “Learning, unlearning, and relearning to be effective in God’s mission.”
 - o Murray Decker, “The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions.”
 - o Michael Jaffarian, “The Statistical State of the North American Protestant Missions Movement,” from the *Mission Handbook*, 20th Edition.
- How do we read this new world, and who helps us read it?
 - o If you ask an U.S. citizen where they were on 911, they will know, but when you ask people in other cultures, they may think you’re talking about a new softdrink!
 - o The world is not flat, it is lumpy. It is flat for those who are the victors of globalization, but for the victims the world is lumpy.
 - o The world is a new world in many ways. It is tough to be a US citizen and travel around the world, especially when people ask you whom you voted for.
 - o The world is being redefined and missions being redefined.
- What about shifts in mission?
 - o The trend that I see is this focus on holistic mission.
 - o Many things are taking place that we must learn from. But I’m concerned because I wonder where is the Gospel and the Church in all of this?
 - o The whole issue of the local church in the global era. The vast majority of the mission movement in Latin America is driven by the churches, whereas the mission boards are serving the churches. Churches that dropping your support because you don’t align with their newly formed mission, not informed by your input.

- The decadal fads. The 10/40 window, Russia, at al.
- More young people today are saying we want to go to the continent for life. We can send all these resources, but are we sending our own flesh and blood. The biblical model is that the whole people of God exists for the whole mission of God in the whole world of God. Bill is encouraged by the missional trends that he sees.
- Our missional vision and practices in the West must be shaped by the voices of the Southern church. However, we must be discerning which voices we listen to. Some mission leaders in the Southern church are isolated and not leaders of church movements. We must discern and listen to those who have the credibility, reputation, and vision for what God wants to do. Then, maybe we will partner with them, and maybe we won't.

Leadership Roundtable: A Conversation for Ministry Leaders

Panel with 20somethings

- How do you see 20somethings (20s) perceiving the world today?
 - Life is more positive and hopeful. 20s are ready to commit their lives to Christ
 - Want to be real.
 - Many 20s see the world as a realm of endless opportunities. The world isn't as closed as other people may think it is.
- If you see the world as open, what has changed that makes the world feel more open?
 - Technology and the internet
- What does it mean to want to be real?
 - It is a reaction to corporate, advertizing America.
 - Coming out of a fundamental Baptist mindset – this is true, correct and right and everyone else is wrong.
 - Being real with yourself. I don't know what something means – acknowledge that and embrace it.
- What does it mean to be a Christian and an American in the 21st Century?
 - For me, I think of my role as being an American from the Christian perspective. For instance, I want to care about where products are coming from. Realizing that I am wealthy comparatively to the rest of the world, I want to give to those who are poor materially.
 - It is hard to compartmentalize, “I'm an American, which means...” “I'm a Christian, which means...”
- In what way is it hard to be a young Christian and young American today?
 - There is a massive responsibility that comes with being a Christian. Thus, it is hard to give to the poor when I am struggling financially as a new spouse in graduate school. There are so many sermons on giving to the poor, social justice, etc., but it is difficult to live that out.

- It is very hard to slow down in our culture when there is a lot of pressure to have tons of Facebook friends and to gain more and more.
- What do 20s understand by the term Christian?
 - Some think that being a Christian is merely a belief system and others think it's purely religious actions.
 - Other 20s who are claiming to be Christians are recognizing that they need to follow Jesus before they can serve others in the name of Jesus.
 - 20s who don't claim to follow Christ are fine with others who claim to follow Jesus. They think of it as the same thing like, "You like to be a Christian just like I like to go skiing."
 - 20s are willing to hear you share about your following of Jesus.
- What are the aspects of Christianity that are inoffensive and offensive to 20s today?
 - 20s are offended by those who claim definitive absolutes.
 - 20s are offended by claiming that Jesus is the only way to the Father.
 - 20s are offended by those who amalgamate religion/Christianity and politics.
- How can we share the Gospel when we know core elements of the Gospel can be offensive?
 - Going where they are and meeting them and building relationships. I want to see that you are real.
 - Loving people where they are and not just placing ambiguous or unknown expectations on them. Don't try to fix the 20s but try to love them.
- What do 20s think of short-term missions? Why do they go and what do they think about long-term missions?
 - To get out and experience new things with people that they know. Long-term is my commitment to Jesus Christ forever till I die. Short-term is where am I, where do I work, and where do I live, and what am I called to do at this point in my life.
 - The tension between work teams that are tourist-oriented and service-oriented is very difficult.
 - Some want to help change people, help others; there are others who come because they want to be a transformed person as a result of their experience and service.
- What do you need from older leaders and what can you give?
 - I need mentoring, encouragement, and people to believe in me. I need people to believe what God is doing in me, through me, and all around me.
 - I need people to take a risk with me, to believe in me and do it together with me.
 - I need people to see in me things that I don't see, things that I think other people are more qualified for. I need more people to take a risk on me.

Leadership Roundtable: A Conversation for Ministry Leaders

Breakout Groups

- To be real, authentic, transparent, honest, vulnerable. We all wear so many masks. Intentionally taking down the masks I've put up.
- 20s want us to genuinely listen to what they have to say. As mission agencies, we aren't cookie cutters. Each 20something needs to be treated as individuals.
- Communicating with the 20s we cannot communicate down, but on the same level. Coming into every conversation as a learner, as much as it is as a teacher.
- We must be vulnerable. I'm sorry I don't know the answer.
- We must share our stories and listen to theirs, and if there's an opportunity to talk about missions that's great.
- Relationship-building is not just a one-time encounter.
- We must be a person who is committed with no strings attached and no agenda to fix.
- We must be their cheer-leaders.
- It is important that they see reps from organizations working together. They will be turned off by our sales-pitches.
- The use of story, whether your own or someone else's, everyone loves story, opening the door to others.

Leadership Roundtable: A Conversation for Ministry Leaders

Dr. Bill Taylor, "Transition Thoughts"

- It is important to engage the different cluster streams of 20s, then you will get a mosaic.
 - o Stream one: Personality bent is for something very orderly, straight, and clear. Come out of church backgrounds.
 - o Stream two: Recovering fundamentalists. People who are reacting against their traditions (e.g., reformed, Dispensational, et al.)
 - o Stream three: MKs who have remained in a hermetically sealed Christian bubble. There is a cohort of young adults who are using the older structures, whom we must encourage!
- The wise church has a strategic partnership with 20s at two levels:
 - o Training. In our study in attrition, two causes were weaknesses in spirituality and relationships. The school thinks the church needs to engage in spiritual formation and the church relegates that activity to the school. The church must take on this role, however, there are areas of training that the church cannot do!
 - o Field Relationships. Who will the 20s work with on the field? Church ministries would be immeasurably strengthened and viable if they strategically link their young missionaries with key personnel on the outset of their mission.

- I don't care where they are geographically, I'm on their side if their heart is alive to God. Personally, I am hugely encouraged. My concern is that these agencies tap into the streams.

Thursday, February 07, 2008

Leadership Roundtable: A Conversation for Ministry Leaders

Dr. Bill Taylor, "Learning to Listen"

- Not everyone has the gift of listening. Some are more concerned with hearing and not listening, and hearing and not responding. We must listen with a sense of discernment, asking God for the gift of discernment – what is this person saying and what is this person not saying. How do I understand the body language when someone is talking. It is hard to listen by email, and so many of our interpersonal communication is by email.
- When I try to listen to a younger generation, I have many streams of understanding.
- I'm trying to listen as I read other sources.
 - o *The Economist* and *The World* are very helpful, provocative magazines that expose me to the 20s generation. *Bella* is a very useful film, not tying up loose ends.
 - o Relationships with secular 20s. Bill's story doing a "religious" wedding with unbelieving, postmodern 20s. Terribly hard, but terribly important. How do you sustain relationships with secular friends. If the Gospel doesn't work in secular Austin, what guarantee will it work anywhere else.
- Listening, discerning, reading, determining: reflections from the younger generation
 - o It is very difficult to listen to the whole mosaic of the 20s, but it must be done.
- How do we walk the Jesus way?
 - o In word – letting the word of God govern our lives
 - o In deed – living the word
 - o In Spirit – empowered evangelicals
 - o In worship
 - o In sign – empowered evangelicals
 - o In community – some are drawn to authentic community, but are concurrently repelled by community
- The costly way of following Jesus
 - o The downward path of mobility – to the cross, counter-cultural
 - We present to 20s a beautiful and costly discipleship.
 - o Revive the cost and don't mince words
 - Regardless of which culture you live, don't dumb down the gospel, at the same time don't falsely load it with extra bologna, junk food.

- If we are calling 20s to cross-cultural mission, we need to be honest with them about the inevitable suffering of following Jesus.
 - Be creative, loving and realistic
 - When you talk with anyone who entered cross-cultural mission, there is a powerful generative story that impelled them. There is a father, a friend, a mentor, a story of people.
 - Call to lifetime transformative discipleship, regardless of geography, vocation, age, job
 - I don't care where people are geographically, I want them to love Jesus. I know a couple who love the Lord, but they are struggling.
 - When we communicate this lifetime transformative discipleship to generation-xers, we don't care what you are doing, but can you give it a five year shot? Are you willing to go for 5 years.
- The flexible way
 - On terms of service
 - Now terms are very flexible. 1 year on the field, 1 year in blood country.
 - On jobs to be done
 - One of the primary causes of attrition of Australian missionaries is an unawareness of the actual tasks of what husbands and wives will do. The attrition rate of Western missionaries in Europe is phenomenally high.
 - On geography
 - On team
 - On loyalties
 - But always firm on life-long passion for the missional God
- The creative short-term way
 - ST with the right double-strategy: for both home and field
 - ST for families
 - Little children see God working miracles.
 - ST with wise financial stewardship, investment
 - ST that folds into mid-term and longer-term
- The full meal deal
- On funding mission today
 - What are all the models out there?
 - What has not yet been done?
 - What kind of creativity can we generate in the area of funding mission?
 - From young entrepreneurs to young retirees
 - Kingdom companies and strategic ventures
 - New ways of looking a partnership building
- The way of the arts

- Pope Benedict on the arts
- Where is our theology of the arts beyond arts for evangelism?
 - 20s art is bloody, gruesome, and it speaks. It is not Thomas Kinkade. But these 20s are expressing the beauty of God as an end in and of itself.
- What is the place of the arts in the world today?
 - In Austin today, we have very brilliant young Christian filmmakers
- What is the place of arts in the younger generations today?
- www.transformingculture.org
- Wrapping up: Celtic Mission – 4th to 8th Centuries
 - Trinitarian, lovers of Psalms and John
 - Community based, passionate about creation
 - Committed to arts, education and beauty
 - Releasing women and men into full ministry
 - Aware of the tri-coloured martyrdom
 - White –serious acts of spiritual discipline
 - Green – leaving home, family, green, clan, people, language to follow the call of the wild goose
 - Red – shedding blood and life
- Questions for Bill?
 - Work and mission?
 - You can take your business anywhere in the world. The tragedy is those who think they will be able to stay in the country when they are not offering the country something it sees, wants, and will advance its agenda and reputation.
 - We need American Kingdom businesses to support the mission of God in the sending of missionaries and supporting indigenous efforts, just as cross-cultural businesses are supporting local, indigenous efforts.
 - Have you heard post-secularism?
 - Some people are fed up with secularism, but if you mention Jesus, they are still offended.
 - Are 20s catching a vision to express the beauty of God
 - It is in the very early stages, but many are catching the vision, in spite of missionaries and expats.
 - Helpful websites on missions/culture/money
 - www.globalirichlist.com
 - www.emptytomb.com
 - www.transformingculture.com

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Discussion Groups

- Creative funding: 5-7 ideas on how to fund missions.
- What 5-7 themes from the Biblical narrative should inform how we disciple 20-somethings?
- What are 5-7 issues that church and agencies must keep in mind on missions with 20s?

For audio and visual resources on the following presentations, please scroll down on the GLC Symposium webpage:

Common Ground: A Workshop for Youth, College, and Mission Volunteers

Presenters: Dave Livermore & Steve Argue

GRTS Chapel:

Bruce Huseby, "Confessions of a Boomer"