

YMI Newsletter

2013 No. 2

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An Inside Look

Matt Vaughan, a career youth minister in the Midwest who took a sabbatical to teach at an inner city school last year, called me in January. I have known Matt since he was in the ninth grade. He is over 40 years old now with lots of life and ministry experience.

"How's the teaching job, Matt?"

"I think I have had a change of heart, Steve. I thought God was calling me to teach every day. But, after the 300 person riot at my school last fall I have had second thoughts."

Well, yeah. Who wouldn't?

Matt is a gifted youth minister and teacher. He is meticulous. He is a trained architect. So, he knows how to put things together.

"Matt, if we ever opened up a YMI in the Midwest, I think you could do it."

Now it is four months later. Matt has had nine drafts of a business plan that he has presented to 40 potential donors, partners and board members in and around Kansas City. At our last board meeting, we voted to allow Matt to open YMI Midwest.

Now we get to see if it translates. Will YMI work in a different geographic area? Will new and exciting partnerships develop because of a national presence? But, more importantly, we KNOW that we will strategically help local churches and their youth ministers become more effective!!!

Our board is working on a structure and relationship between the two geographic areas that is structurally sound and insures that the Youth Ministry Institute in both areas are delivering quality training to youth ministers and support to the church.

Stay tuned to see how this develops. And pray that Matt doesn't run into any riots in his new line of work!

Most Recently

Commissioning Service 2013





Random Statistics

Statistics can cut both ways. These past two years have given a manic feel to statistic followers like me. You'll see what I mean.

17 - In September we began with the largest group of youth ministers to date (both years combined). How exciting!!!

6 - Over the last two years we lost (maybe not the best word - but you know what I mean) this many to a variety of reasons: 2 to seminary, 2 to job changes, 1 to too many other jobs and 1 to the mission field. Compare that to the next statistic.

93% - The percentage of youth ministers who finished YMI the previous three years (we only "lost" one).

10 - This is our goal for the class that begins in August. We have 4 oral commitments so far.

Coming Soon

The Academy Rises Again!!!

Some may not know about The Academy. In October 2011, it was YMI's conferencing experiment. It worked for the most part. Those that attended had a great experience. Two of YMI's current students came to The Academy first. While YMI spent what it expected to spend, the number of registrations didn't meet the goal of the event. So, if we were to do it again, we would need partners.

Thank goodness for great friends! The Ministry Architects, the Florida United Methodist Conference, the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida and the Florida Episcopal Diocese are teaming up to do The Academy in late January or early February. The line up of instructors will be fabulous. YMI instructors and Ministry Architect consultants will comprise most of the faculty.

We are still negotiating for main stage talent. Once that is secure and a web site is developed, the notices will go out! Our goal is to be a regional event for those in the Southeast looking for a more personal and in depth training and inspirational experience.

Final Word

From the YMI Guy's Blog

Check out these words. Precision, Accuracy, Exact. I love them. But, they do get me in trouble.

I love to know exactly how something works. If something doesn't work, I have been known to take it apart even if I don't know anything about it before I disassemble it.

That is probably why I love statistics so much. Statistics report results. They are not arguable unless of course one debates the source of the statistics.

My love of systems comes from these words, too. I have the mistaken notion that if a system has sufficient precision and accuracy, then it will produce exact results. Unfortunately, people are not very exact. People are unpredictable. Circumstances surrounding people are too variable. Therefore, any system involving people is flawed from the beginning.

Of course, our society still glorifies systems that get great results. Take sports for example. In basketball there is Phil Jackson and the "triangle" offense made famous by Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. There was Joe Montana and the "west coast offense". Stepping away from sports, there was "Reaganomics" characterizing an economic policy that pulled our country out of inflationary spending. For every one system that is successful, there are dozens of systems in the scrap heap. Check out the "wing t offense" or "no child left behind" (although some would argue this one still).

Systems may be less about the system and more about timing and commitment from the people in the system. In the United States this is difficult. We are very wary of someone promoting a system for fear of being brainwashed. A system that works requires great commitment with little or no deviation from the intended goals. Take David Koresh and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. They were working a system. It didn't turn out so well for them.

All of my examples seem to be from the '80s and '90s, possibly reflecting my age. Or maybe, systems are not the "in" thing. Maybe people have come to the realization that a system by itself doesn't produce accurate or precise results all of the time. There are still systems that exist. I currently run one, the Youth Ministry Institute.

For the systems to work in this century it requires that we adjust our expectations. In today's sports world, successful coaches evaluate their players before determining the system. Along the way, they receive feedback so that they can tweak the system here and there. Instead of people fitting into a system, the system is formed around the people. This can be more difficult. The system engineer must always be willing to adjust while still adhering to the objectives of the organization. It becomes a system in balance and in flux. There is nothing precise about it. It

is rarely accurate, as it is always moving and changing. There are no predictable results, only "hoped for" outcomes.

This is where I can get in trouble. Remember, I love these words. When I focus on these words and the hypothetical system that I surmise might produce them, I am usually in for a rude awakening. When I focus on the people for whom the system is designed, great unexpected results occur.