

South East Asian Theological Schools, Inc.

SEATS

Schools of Ministry

Discipling Leaders ¹ Building Nations

SOM-03 Building Kingdom Values

This course will discuss how the church can begin Building a Small Piece of God's Kingdom. This will include understanding and deciding which issues are essential and which are non-essential as we seek to fulfill our mission. It will also begin defining a cell group.

I. ESSENTIALS vs NON-ESSENTIALS

“in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas”
 [“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”]
 Rupertus Meldenus.

How important is it to you? *Gaano ka halaga sa iyo?*

“I often tell people that there are some things that I believe that I would die for; there are some things that I believe that I would lose an arm for; there are some things that I believe that I would lose a finger for; and then there are some things that I believe that I would not even get a manicure for.” -C. Michael Patton

Madalas ko'ng sinaasabi sa ibang tao na meron akong mga paniwalaan na pumayag akong mamamatay; meron iba na ; meron din naman ibang paniniwala na kahit nawalan ako ng diliri payag ako; pero meron din mga ibang paniniwala na kahit magpapamanicure ako hindi ako papayag!

Here is a recent post on my blog:

Essentials vs Non-Essentials

Had an interesting discussion in our School of Ministry yesterday. We were talking about how the church is to be an example of the Kingdom of God on earth by exhibiting its values and by being a true community.

Of course, our discussion eventually ended up at the old axiom: “in essential matters, unity; in non-essential matters, liberty; in all other matters, charity.” My colleague, William Camba, pointed out that we don't really seem to have trouble over the essential matters – we aren't always discussing within our churches whether there really is a trinity or if Jesus is God or not. We do, however, seem to get caught up on the non-essentials – what colour to paint the walls, what kind of music to play, or what clothes we should wear during worship. The thing is there is also a distinct lack of liberty and love expressed during these times. William illustrated his point with a personal story about how he was recently distracted while attending a conference because the speaker was wearing flip-flops. “Why isn't he wearing shoes?” was the question going through his mind. Upon his observation of the reactions of others to the slippers (ie no one else seemed to be offended), he eventually began to ask himself whether the problem was really his own and perhaps he was making something an essential that really isn't essential.

The class then went on to discuss that most contentious of church issues, namely music. To be honest I wasn't really happy with where the rest of the discussion and feel that I wasn't able to wrap up the day on a positive note. After, however, a lot of thought, I realise we really need to have a way of determining what is essential and what is not so that we can avoid conflict in these areas in the future and so that we can practice the liberty and charity that we want to.

So what makes some things essential and other things non-essential?

Other than certain foundational theological truths that we can't mess with, we are surrounded by a vast amount of stuff that can be classified as personal preferences – the songs we sing, the words we use, the Bible version we prefer, the clothes we wear, etc. How can we navigate this quagmire?

The key is that we need to return to the essentials of the church. For example, the Bible describes a church that is not merely to exist but to function properly. Some call this being missional but for the past few years we at SEATS have been talking about the Functional Church. Our churches are to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ (kerygma). They are also to exhibit the values of the Kingdom of God (koinonia). They are to be centers of service to both God and Humans (diakonia), and they are to bear the truth, even to the point of death (marturia).

In determining if something is essential, we need to return to these basic functions. Take the earlier example of music in the church. When we think about being functional in proclaiming the Good News we need to see what is essential. It is essential that the Good News be proclaimed in our public singing but the form that public singing takes is not essential. As long as it gets the job done in the best way possible.

We also need to declare the truth through our music. The form, however, is non-essential. As long as it is effective in declaring the truth then we should do it. If it is not, then we need to modify or change it.

Is it possible to serve through music? As long as the music is functional then its form is secondary. The same goes for proclaiming the values of the kingdom.

You may have noticed that forms are very much based upon societal norms. Keeping music as the example, if we want to reach fans of emo, then we can use emo. If we want to reach fans of country music then use country. If rockers, then rock. And on and on it goes. What is clear is that there is no longer only one societal norm.

So how does the church deal with these issues? One way is by having some kind of multiple services, each one targeted for a different society. (Of course, if you want to check out a different society's service, prepare to misunderstand it ☺).

Another option for churches is to use the following statement: "We are not doing this particular thing for you – it is for (name of target)." This must be combined with a follow-up: "This is what we are doing for you."

Paul saw his acting like a Jew or acting like a Greek as nonessentials. He didn't force people to conform to his preferences but rather conformed to theirs. In light of Paul's attitude, we need to have the following conversation in our churches:

What is our goal at our church? To have newcomers conform to our list of preferences or to conform to their preferences so they might more easily learn the essentials/become disciples?

How can our _____ best fulfill this function? What forms need to be modified? What forms need to be changed? What forms need to be redeemed?

What are your essentials? I encourage the members of SEATS Schools of Ministry to give their opinions on the discussion board at <http://www.facebook.com/seatsinc>

But just remember: liberty and charity.¹

II. THE PROBLEM WE ALL FACE

We all have our personal preferences. We all have our own personal beliefs. So how do we bridge the gap between the two? How do I make sure my own preferences do not infringe upon the preferences or beliefs of others? How can I, in Christian love, make sure that I present Jesus as Saviour without imposing my desires or even idea of salvation upon you? How can I make sure you encounter Jesus on your own terms?

Have you ever thought about those things that you feel are essential to your ministry, whether it is pastoral ministry, cell leadership, or ministry in the marketplace? By essentials we mean, what are the areas where you will not compromise in your belief, practice, or teaching?

In thinking about the essentials, also think about those things that are not essential to your ministry. By non-essentials we mean those areas where you are willing to compromise in your belief, practice, or teaching?

Write your thoughts in the space provided below:

Essentials / Mga Kailangan	Non-Essentials / Hindi Kailangan

¹ Michael J. Fast, *Life in the Fast Lane -- Essentials vs Non-Essentials*, 2010, <http://thefasts.blogspot.com/> (accessed 2010).

III. ESSENTIALS VS NON-ESSENTIALS

A. How can we define the Essentials of Ministry?

1. What do we do? / What's the big picture?
2. What is our vision?
3. What are our goals?
4. What functions must the church carry out?

B. How can we define the Non-Essentials of Ministry?

1. How do we do ministry?
2. What are the details of the plan for how we will accomplish the vision, mission, & goals?

C. Given the above two definitions, what are the implications for our ministry?

1. We may need to learn new ways
2. We may need to understand new societies
3. We may need to be uncomfortable

IV. FENCES, WELLS & SETS / MGA HARANG, BALON, AT URI NG GRUPO

How does farming help us understand the issue?

Imagine you have a herd of cows. How do you keep them from being scattered all over the place? One option is to put up a fence so that your cows stay in your property, and your neighbour's cows stay on her property. It is obvious whose cows are whose. Ownership is defined by being inside or outside the fence.

A second option is to dig a well. When the cows are thirsty, they will come to drink at your well. Even though the cows may wander from time to time, since water is essential to them, they will always return home to drink it.

This illustration can be applied to the church. As Christians who have gathered together to "win souls and make disciples" or to "win, consolidate, disciple, and send," which type of farm is better to set up?

Some churches define themselves by their fences. These fences usually consist of rules of things you do or don't do. For example, many churches have a moral code something like this: Good Christians don't smoke, don't dance, and don't drink. They don't listen to worldly music. They attend church every Sunday. How do I know that you are a Christian? Because you fit into the fences that I have built.

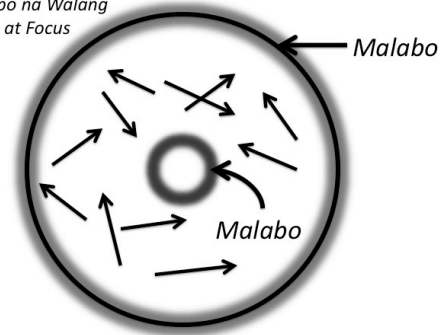
Other churches define themselves by the wells they dig. They hold onto certain core beliefs and however these beliefs are expressed is ok, as long as they remain connected to the core. How do I know that you are a Christian? Because you have committed yourself to Christ and have him at the center of your life.

Sets / Mga Uri Ng Grupo

The story of the farmers reminds us of three different kinds of groups. We will refer to these as Bounded Sets, Fuzzy Sets, and Centered Sets.

1. *Fuzzy Sets [Uri ng Grupo na Walang Limitasyon at Focus]* are in reality informal groups with no clear idea of what boundaries exist or even what is at their core. They have been drawn together for some reason. However, if they are to remain together, they must either become either a bounded-set or a centered set. This is often the form a group takes near its beginning or near its end. An example would be the various EDSA Revolutions. A very informal group of citizens came together for a purpose (not that clearly defined) but a few days later the group disbanded.

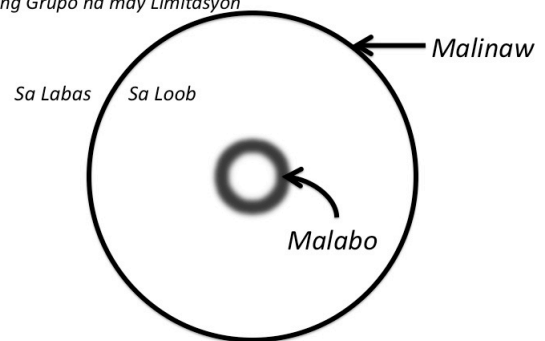
Fuzzy Set /
Uri ng Grupo na Walang
Limitasyon at Focus



If your cell is like this, what will happen? *Kapag ganito ang cell mo, ano kaya ang mangyayari?*

2. *Bounded Sets [Uri ng Grupo na May Limitasyon]* are groups where boundaries are important but whose core values are not as clearly defined. Groups like this place great value on defining what makes a person in and what makes a person out. The bounded set is like the farmer who puts up fences to keep his cows in. It is very clear to see who is in and who is out. Most traditional churches and denominations are like this with the ultimate goal being to attract people to join the group. An example would be a country like North Korea. There is a clearly defined border (which is not easy to cross), but the ideological core of the country is eroded.

Bounded Set /
Uri ng Grupo na may Limitasyon

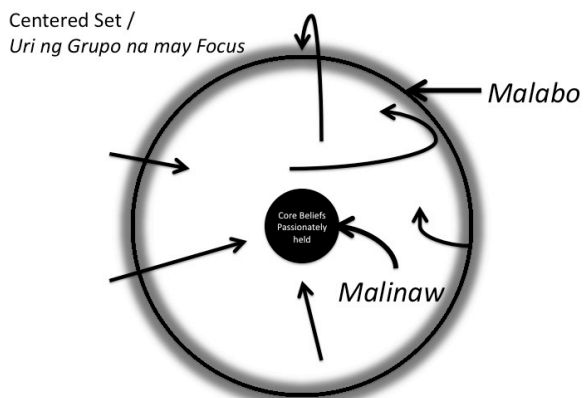


If your cell is like this, what will happen? *Kapag ganito ang cell mo, ano kaya ang mangyayari?*

3. *Centered Sets [Uri ng Grupo na May Focus]* are groups where the outer boundaries are not as important as a few, passionately held and believed core values. As long as these core

values are maintained, the shape and appearance of the group is not important. An example would be _____.

If your cell is like this, what will happen?
Kapag ganito ang cell mo, ano kaya ang mangyayari?



Sets & the Church / Ang Mga Uri ng Grupo & Ang Iglesya

How do these Sets relate to the church? What would a Bounded-Set Church look like? What would a Centered-Set Church look like?²

Bounded-Set Church	Centered-Set Approach Church
The evangeliser is the expert who has special knowledge regarding God that the 'lost person' must take in to be saved. <i>Isang expert ang ebanghelista na may espesyal na kaalaman tungkol sa Diyos na nangangailangan ang 'taong nawala' para maligtas siya.</i>	Each person is the expert on his or her own life, & has to God-given ability to seek for the truth. The evangeliser respects this. <i>Isang expert ang bawat isa sa sarili niyang buhay, at may kapabilidad galing ng Diyos para hanapin ang katotohanan. Nirespeto nito ang ebanhelista.</i>
The "lost" person is viewed as flawed in character & sinful. <i>Ang "nawala" ay pinansin bilang isang taong kulang at makasalanan.</i>	Each person is viewed as created in the image of God – precious, valuable, & loved by God. <i>Ang bawat tao ay pinansin nang nilikha sa kawangis ng Diyos – mahalaga at minamahal ng Diyos.</i>
Seeing people as simply lost or saved, it tries to paternally "fix up" sinners & make them like us. <i>Dahil pinapansin nito ang mga tao bilang mga nawala o mga ligtas, "inaayos" nito para ama ang mga makasalanan para sila ay maging tulad sa atin.</i>	Seeing people as seekers, it tries to stimulate others to ask, seek, & knock, while understanding we don't know it all ourselves. <i>Dahil pinapansin nito ang mga tao bilang taga-hanap ng katotohanan ay nang naunawaan natin na kulang ang ating pagkaintindi tungkol sa Diyos.</i>
The goal is to get them to sign on, to profess belief, to become part of our team. <i>Ang hangarin ay , , maging bahagi sila ng team natin.</i>	The goal is for the process of discovery of Christ & the search for truth to be furthered in the person. <i>Ang hangarin ay na ang pagtuklas si Kristo & paghahanap ng katotohanan ay matutuloy sa</i>

² Adapted from Chris Harding, "Unpublished Policy Document" (Sydney: YFC) in Michael Frost & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 50

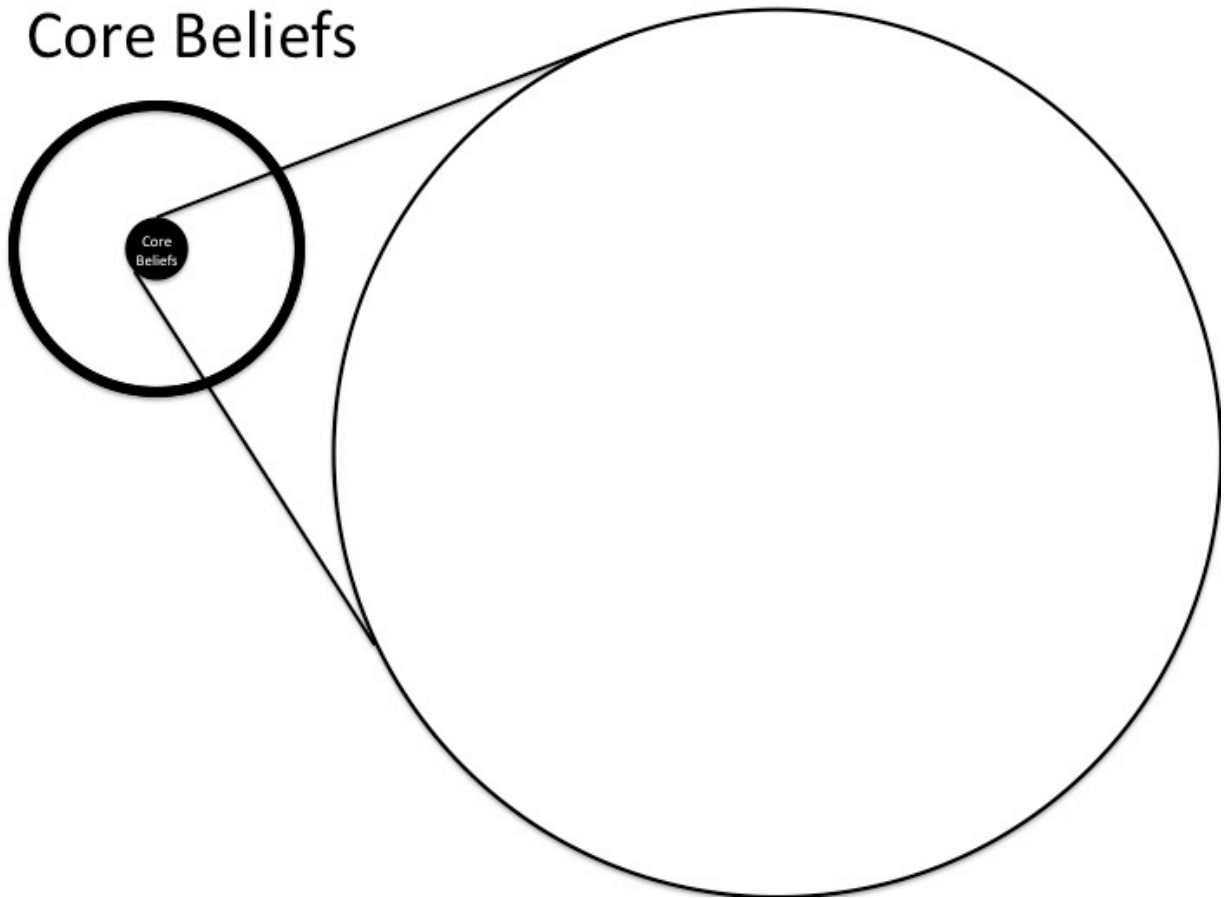
	<i>tao.</i>
A cataclysmic change occurs in people called "conversion." <i>Ang pagbabalik-loob sa Diyos ay isang kahanga-hangang nangyari sa buhay ng tao.</i>	Conversion is a process that does not begin & end w/ 'accepting Christ' but begins w/ the HS's prevenient grace on the person's life & continues thru repentance for a lifetime. <i>Ang pagbabalik-loob sa Diyos ay isang processo na hindi nag-umpisa o matapos sa pagtanggap kay Kristo bilang tagapagligtas kundi ito'y nag-umpisa sa grasya ng ES sa buhay ng tao & sa pagsisisi sa buong buhay.</i>
We Christians know & have the whole truth <i>Nasa atin mga Kristiyanoy ang buong katotohanan.</i>	We don't know everything about life or God – humility & wonder remain. <i>Hindi namin nalaman ang lahat ng bagay tungkolsa buhay or Diyos – nananatili ang pagpakumbaba & paghanga.</i>

Paalala

If our non-essentials are more fuzzy, it will be easier for people to come near to our essentials! *Kung mas malabo ang ating mga non-essentials, mas madali silang makakarating sa ating mga essentials!*

So what do we center our set around? What becomes the core of our movement? That is what is essential to your church! Think for a moment about your core beliefs. What is it that keeps bringing you back to Jesus? What are you connected with this church? What is it that makes you excited about your life with Christ? Write your core beliefs in the large circle, below: *Isulat ang inyong pinakamahalagang paniniwala sa bilog sa ibaba:*

Core Beliefs



But how do we know that what we have at the core is really the core? *Pero, paano ba natin malalaman kung ang nilagay natin sa centro ay dapat nailagay sa centro?*³ We need to use a process that will guard our core to make sure we have the right essentials.

1. The task of wrestling with the problem is an ongoing process of discernment, not a simple matter of logical deduction.
2. Centered-set communities must commit to truth as a way of life in order to lessen the problems that come from self-ignorance and self-deception in the search for the common center.
3. This process of discernment should be a community process where each member of the community commits to stay in community.
4. The community discernment process should be Bible-based because Scripture is the most reliable witness we have to the character of Jesus.

What is a Cell? *Ano ba talaga ang Cell?*

³ Ryan McAnally-Linz, "The Problem of the Contested Center".

All of this leads us to the next question: So what exactly is a cell? Certainly we have heard this word a lot over the past few years but it is something that has never been really defined. For us it is easy to define Celebration because we experience it every Sunday. We know the liturgy, we know the songs, and we even know the sermons that are preached. But when it comes to cell we are a little clueless. All of this is because we haven't experienced it as much as celebration. But, don't be confused; it is not any less church than celebration is.

In light of our discussion of essentials and non-essentials, it is important for us to understand the reasons why we do things. Many of us begin with church and try to find out how to modify and adapt it to meet the needs facing us in society. We adopt Seeker Services to help bring in non-Christians to our worship. We improve our signage so more people will notice us and come through the door. We assume that in order to do our God-given task, we must invite people into our church on Sunday in order for them to experience the goodness of God. Now, none of these things are wrong. We are just trying to solve a problem without starting from the beginning.

One of the first classes of this program was all about Jesus – who he is, how my culture understands him, how I can follow him more, etc. We need to return to Jesus in order for us to discover what we must do today.

Frost & Hirsch have a diagram that helps us understand these steps:⁴



We begin with who Jesus is. That helps us understand what our mission to the world is (and that it is actually his mission). Finally we get to the point where we determine what form that mission will take. Will it take the form of formal celebration on Sunday morning? Will it take the form of informal gatherings in houses during the week? Will it involve me preaching on the bus? Will it involve me talking to my neighbours about the hope I have in life? It all depends upon the situation.

Using the diagram below, think about these three ideas in your area. Who is Jesus? *Sino ba si Jesus?* What is our mission? *Ano ba talaga ang misyon natin?* Now think about what form our mission will take in the world. What will it look like? Where will it be? How will it help fulfill God's mission to the world?

⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).



Once we have answered the final question, we have also answered the question of cell. What is cell? It is whatever helps me achieve God's mission in my community!

V. JESUS' ESSENTIALS

Jesus talked about leadership, particularly the leadership of the world. He said, "You know that the acknowledged rulers of nations have absolute power over people and their officials have absolute authority over people." (Mark 10:42). The world's leadership is power-based.

Jesus also talked about the kind of leadership he was bringing. He said, "But that's not the way it's going to be among you. Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant. Whoever wants to be most important among you will be a slave for everyone. It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people." (Mark 10:43-45) Actually he didn't just talk about it, he demonstrated it. In one of the most remarkable acts in the history of the world, Jesus "... got up from the table, removed his outer clothes, took a towel, and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel that he had tied around his waist" (John 13:4-5).

When we apply these concepts to the bounded and centered sets we talked about earlier, Jesus is saying that the leadership of the world is based upon either bounded or fuzzy sets. There is a law made or a command given and those laws and commands must be followed. If you don't follow the command you are out. If you want in, you must change yourself so that you will be accepted in. The result is that people want out so they can set up their own bounded set. People are drawn to powerful people in the hopes that they too will receive power. But once it is clear that the power is not intended to be shared, they leave to seek power elsewhere. Nothing changes and no benefit is gained.

Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet, however, is like the centered set. Jesus is saying, through his actions, that we should not worry about the rules or systems of the world. Rather we should demonstrate love, caring, and acceptance. It is this humility that is the key to Christian discipleship. The man who has power I will follow until I get something from him. The man who does not seek power, but who serves me willingly I will serve until I die because he truly has my best interests at heart.