



## Agenda

- First things: assumptions
- Main Points
- Example: The Bible
- Example: Early Church
- Example: Medieval Church
- Example: Modern Church
- Example: AC Church
- Potential Lessons

PERFECTING  
LOVE

## First Things

History prods us, provokes us, inspires us, and teaches us.  
One of the most important things it can teach us is humility.  
The Bible is our ultimate guide.

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## First Things

Christian historian and theologian Justo L. Gonzalez:

“Like it or not, we are heirs to [a] host of diverse and even contradictory witnesses. Some of their actions we may find revolting, and others inspiring. But all of them form part of our history. All of them, those whose actions we admire as well as those whose actions we despise, brought us to where we are now.”

PERFECTING  
LOVE

Gonzalez: “Without understanding that past, we are unable to understand ourselves, for in a sense the past still lives in us and influences who we are and how we understand the Christian message. When we read, for instance, that “the just shall live by faith,” Martin Luther [1483-1546] is whispering at our ear how we are to interpret those words—and this is true even for those of us who have never even heard of Martin Luther. When we hear that “Christ died for our sins,” Anselm of Canterbury [1033/34-1109] sits in the pew with us, even though we may not have the slightest idea who Anselm was. When we stand, sit, or kneel in church; when we sing a hymn, recite a creed (or refuse to recite one); when we build a church or preach a sermon, a past of which we may not be aware is one of the factors influencing our actions. The notion that we read the New Testament exactly as the early Christians did, without any weight of tradition coloring our interpretation, is an illusion. It is also a dangerous illusion, for it tends to absolutize our interpretation, confusing it with the Word of God.”

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Gonzalez: "One way we can avoid this danger is to know the past that colors our vision. A person wearing tinted glasses can avoid the conclusion that the entire world is tinted only by being conscious of the glasses themselves. Likewise, if we are to break free from the *undue* [emphasis mine—there are good and appropriate ways we are bound to the wisdom we inherit from tradition] bondage to tradition, we must begin by understanding what that tradition is, how we came to be where we are, and how particular elements in our past color our view of the present. It is then that we are free to choose which elements in the past—and in the present—we wish to reject, and which we will affirm."

(*The Story of Christianity* 1, 2010, 3).

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## Main Points

- The body disciplines the individual: In the past, discipleship has been cooperative between individuals and the corporate church.
- The body is disciplined: In the past, discipleship has used the whole person to disciple the whole person.
- Potential Lessons: as disciplers, make discipleship a full experience. As disciples, embrace that full experience.

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### Example: The Bible and Community Discipleship

- The Bible was written in community, directed to community audiences, heard by community, and interpreted by community.
- Handing down versus recreating something new: tradition in the NT.
  - *1Th 4:1* "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

### Example: The Bible, Discipleship, and the Senses

Discipleship engages the whole person and not only the mind.



**Touch:** touching Jesus (healings, the disciple Thomas). Look through the Bible for descriptions of touch and how things feel to the touch.



**Taste:** "ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted." Sermon on the Mount. The bread of life and communion.



**Hearing:** the Spirit speaking, the voice of the Shepherd, the trumpet sounds. Disciples are to "take heed how ye hear." The Bible was meant to be heard.



**Sight:** all of the visual descriptions in the Bible. God's Spirit opens one's eyes.



**Smell:** the incense of worship, proper and "strange." Revelation and the prayers of the Saints (Rev. 8:4)

### Example: The Early Church and Community Discipleship

- The Apostles' Creed and the "holy, catholic, apostolic faith."
- Mentor/evangelist and the catechism of the Church.

### Example: The Early Church, Discipleship, and the Senses

Preparing the whole life for worship and service:

- Life together across the miles (letters and travelers, meeting together), food and worship.
- The sights and sounds and smells of the theater.
- Participating in idol worship, including the eating, incense, and sounds.
- Should manifest an entire conversion, not just an agreement with a creed.

Baptism and the five senses: the touch of the water, the taste of communion following baptism, the sound of the singing, the sight of disrobing and robing in white clothes, the smell of the incense.

### Example: The Medieval Church and Community Discipleship

- Studying the fathers (Peter Lombard, *The Four Books of Sentences*)
- The sacraments were (are) only found in the church.

### Example: The Medieval Church, Discipleship, and the Senses

The Church building (church in Gethsemane) and the silence (the absence of sound), the artwork and architecture, the rest in the pews (relaxing the touch).

#### The Sacraments

Catechism and learning and the Dominicans and Franciscans and . . .

#### Drama in the Streets

### Example: The Modern Church and Community Discipleship

- Focus on Anabaptists
  - Church is central, consensus is necessary, priesthood of the saints.
  - Church discipline and the holiness of the church.
  - Teaching in community and the destruction wrought by technology.
- Modern air conditioning and the weakening of AC community discipleship.

### Example: The Modern Church and Community Discipleship

#### The old Altadena church

- Don't throw berries on the patio.
- Virgil Graf fixing the air conditioner.
- Older sisters fellowshipping while washing dishes.
- Church lunch and dinner and the smell and taste of church (Maywood beans).
- The sounds of singing.
- Grandma Coldeen and her quilts and the smell of her apartment.

### Example: The Modern Church, Discipleship, & the Senses

- My boss Tom, from 15-30:
- The sound of honesty and respect with all customers
  - The value of beauty in work well done.
  - The smell and taste of talking over Pie and Burger cinnamon rolls, and Tom's care for me and generosity.
  - The touch of hard work.
- Others: Bro. Bob Crockett and standing up when a woman entered the room. Virgil Graf and male responsibility to the community. The San Diego church and learning to sing better. My dad and mom and loyalty to church community. So many others.
- But we all had to be together.

### Potential Lessons

#### Work

- Work together with the Church.
- It's not about creating a little you.
  - It's not about building something new.
  - It is about everything that we do.
  - It is about working within the community.

#### Look

Look for experiences and circumstances that engage all of the senses.

#### Embrace

If you are a disciple, embrace the whole experience.

## Suggested Reading

- \*Dyck, Cornelius J. *An Introduction to Mennonite History*. Third. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1993.
- \*Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. Revised and Updated. Vol. I. New York: HarperOne, 2010. See especially chapters 3, 11, 15, 32, and 34.
- \*———. *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*. Revised and Updated. Vol. II. New York: HarperOne, 2010. See especially chapters 6 and 24.
- \*Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- \*Madigan, Kevin. *Medieval Christianity: A New History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. See especially chapters 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, and 21.
- \*Nolt, Steven M., and Thomas J. Meyers. *Plain Diversity: Amish Cultures and Identities*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

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