



(contextual effectiveness) “Cut Yourself Loose”



Exploration Essentials Values of the Atlantic District of The Wesleyan Church

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“Cut Yourself Loose”

Every context requires a different tool for the job

We seek to equip every servant leader to courageously give their best in every place of service for our shared mission – making disciples. We reject the one-size-fits-all notion of popular methodologies & cookie-cutter measurements for effectiveness by recognizing what it means for the Kingdom to win in every context with every leader.

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“Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9:22b-23, NLT)

Whether it’s a church of 15 people or 500 people, we’ve learned two things – ministry to ministry is all the same and ministry to ministry is not the same at all. The different contexts for different churches are expressed well in the heart of Dr. Luke’s account of the Apostle Paul in a passage that inspires us to reset and refocus from Acts 20:17-24, *“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

We believe there is a universal calling on all Christians to point people to Jesus. People do not need to be pointed to us, our churches, or our denomination – they need to be pointed to Jesus. If, as Kingdom leaders, we are not about the main thing, pointing people to Jesus, then we might as well shut the doors.

There is a small “m” ministry to which we are each called. Not small as insignificant, but small as secondary. We believe after our primary, capital “M” calling, we are each given a local and specific mission that reflects the God-directed good works planned in advance for any Believer. This small “m” ministry is a unique mission others may never be called to accomplish. This might be *Mac and Cheese Mondays* to a local high school, working with a pregnancy care center, clean drinking water projects, urban ministry, rural ministry, church planting, church revitalization, camp ministry, and the list goes on.

We need pastors and churches filled with lay leaders who are passionate about the big “M” ministry but also about their unique small “m” ministry. We need people who have clarity and conviction about their local calling. We need *clarity...* in the ways God wants us to steward our influence to impact our world. We need *conviction...* to believe that it actually matters! We need less passive, self-proclaimed Christ-followers and we need more Christians who live with a fire in their belly and tenacity in their spirit. We believe when we see Christians living with clarity and conviction about the ministries entrusted to them, we will see fewer leaders playing *copycat* or the *comparison game*.

Copycat leaders are easily enticed into mimicking another church strategy by allowing pragmatism to motivate their next move? Did Jesus actually ask *you* to do that, or did He ask *them* to do that? Just because it is a good idea doesn’t

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mean it is God’s idea for you. God never calls you to spend your life living out someone else’s ministry.

Comparison game leaders gauge their success on how it stacks up to another ministry program or church. Our ministry is not graded by how it compares to what God has called someone else to do; our unique ministry is graded by how obedient we are to what Jesus asks us to do!

The greatest metric for contextual effectiveness will always be measured by how we are making disciples in our respective places of ministry. The Kingdom needs women *and* men both serving as lay leaders *and* pastors, to ask the hard questions of contextual effectiveness. What is Jesus asking of me (as an individual leader) and/or of us (as a church family)? We believe Jesus will give incredibly unique small “m” ministries even though we all share the same big “M” Ministry. We must become students of our culture and context – like the men of Issachar in I Chronicles 12:32 who, “...understood the times and knew what Israel should do...”

Establishing habits and disciplines as leaders is a must for us to go ever deeper with the Master as we strive to become the best Kingdom leaders possible for His glory and the sake of His Great Cause. Sometimes the wisest way to focus our influence is to shut off social media, skip the conferences, turn off the noise and just... listen to what Jesus is saying to us... right now for this place and this time. Our shared mission compels us to be leaders who are constantly preparing ourselves and those we lead for the “what next” vision He gives us to accomplish.