



Why DTS in YWAM? by Tom Bloomer

Why are so many senior YWAM leaders so convinced that DTS is one of the keys to YWAM's unity, growth and future? Wouldn't it be the fruit that they have observed over the years? And isn't the fruit test the best and most scriptural way to evaluate the effectiveness of any ministry?

YWAM has the requirement that before coming on staff, every person must successfully complete a DTS. A misconception about the DTS requirement is that it originated from the U of N policy. But no, the DTS requirement comes from YWAM's Global Leadership Team, which has consistently maintained the importance of it. In the U of N, DTS is required before any student can attend any of our other schools.

Over my 28 years of involvement with YWAM training, I have come up with a few more specific answers to some of the questions about DTS that I am asked now and then, such as: "Why don't we make it more academic, and move more into a Bible School type of course?" Or, "Why not make it optional, since we need to get our people out onto the field a lot quicker?"

During my doctoral studies, one of the required courses I looked forward to taking was called "Education Toward Spiritual Development." We studied about 60 different books and articles to find out the theories and traditions that the Church has come up with over 2,000 years to move believers toward spiritual maturity. We learned that there are essentially three theories of spiritual growth, each with its champions.

Here are the books we studied more in depth, to illustrate the three theories:

- spiritual maturity comes from learning, the mind studying the Word: "He That Is Spiritual" by Lewis Sperry Chafer
- spiritual maturity comes from a spiritual relationship, connecting with Jesus through prayer: "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis
- spiritual growth comes from serving the poor and the oppressed: "Spirituality and Justice" by Donald Dorr

As different traditions take these tendencies to extremes, we end up with Christians who have a spirituality that is essentially intellectual; or mystical; or oriented to social action.

Another way to name them would be a spirituality of thinking, or of being, or of doing. A Biblical way to view them would be maturing in the Word, or in the Spirit, or in obedience.

But does the Lord expect us to choose one of these alternatives, and to downgrade the other two? Of course not! All three are important. And what about love? God is love; Jesus summed up all obedience as love; the Great Commandment, the New Commandment, and the Last Commandment are all



based on love. What is the place of love in spiritual growth?

Throughout the history of the Church, different traditions have taken hold of the Biblical emphasis on spiritual growth in the context of community: for example, the monastic movements, the Moravians, the early Methodists, down to the charismatic communities of the 1970's and '80's. Community is one of the sources of spiritual growth.

As I wrestled with these concepts and tried to put them together for the course assignments, I remembered Loren's 1970's teaching about the priorities of YWAM schools.

He compared them to a three-stage fountain: as we emphasized relationship with God, there was an overflow of love first for our families and then for the rest of the Body of Christ; and then an overflow of the love among believers so as to reach out to a thirsty world.

Then a conviction began to grow in my heart: our DTS, when done according to the ways God has shown us, is a structure that combines most or even all of the components of spiritual growth!

It is one of the ways the Spirit has led to re-package these ancient truths in a way that can impact this generation.

In other words, the reason we see such rapid growth in student maturity during well-run DTS's is that we have received a package from Heaven that is dynamically and dramatically effective.

What are these different components, that we must safeguard and strengthen in order to see our DTS's reach their full potential? I see the following DTS emphases as crucial to our future as a mission:

- on the Word, coupled with an introduction to Biblical thinking
- on meeting with God, the fear of Him that leads to wisdom, breakthroughs in relationship with Him, personal and group worship
- on relationships within the school, with authority figures, family members, with the local church
- on the needy world out there, the turning of the students away from their own 'stuff' and toward reaching out to the world in merciful witness

Practically, what does this mean in addition to making sure that these elements are included in the curriculum? I would suggest continually underlining the following:

- a cross-cultural dynamic; iron sharpens iron, and when different cultures are thrown together the learning curve shoots up. Multi-cultural DTS's are an incredibly rich learning environment.
- true community: students led into mutual accountability for their actions, words and attitudes; staff modeling all this, plus openness in their relationships; the school and base staff and leaders modeling the same interdependent humility

- emphasis on the importance of outreach; there's no better way to teach this than to model it, with the school leaders leading and not delegating it all, and perhaps even the base leaders going out to visit and encourage the teams.
- staff training: while having young staff close to the students in age and experience is a big part of our success, inexperienced staff should not be thrown into leadership to see if they will sink or swim.
- anointed speakers: the combination of young staff plus visiting speakers is educational dynamite; but not everyone can teach everything. The difference between impartation and information download is that the anointed teachers have been led by the Spirit into doing what they teach.

To sum up, since Jesus commanded us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves; it is logical to think that ministry must be expressed through the will, emotions, spirit, mind, body and relationships. And also that these areas of our being are also portals for learning.

The YWAM DTS, when well-run, not only teaches intellectually, but into our beings through these other doors as well. The student is impacted not only through the formal teaching of the classroom; but the nonformal life of prayer, worship, and work; and the informal input received through contacts around the meal table, in the dorm room, around the buildings, etc.

Finally, two last points in favor of the centrality of DTS for YWAM:

- Unity: Since YWAMers come from over one hundred nations and many more denominations, and since the structure of our organization tends to promote diversity, we very much need some strategies for unity as well.

The Lord has given several, but one of the most important is DTS. The fact that every YWAMer receives three months of unified teaching on the character of God, the importance of the Word, worship, right relationships, etc. is crucial to our unity. Without it, the centrifugal force of our great diversity would one day tear us apart. As both Loren and Darlene emphasize, the six months of DTS "impart the DNA of YWAM" in a deep way that nothing else can replace.

- Humility: Much of the resistance to the DTS requirement comes from those who contend that since their applicants are already mature Christians, they shouldn't be forced to spend six months and lots of money just to fulfill some requirement. But isn't this really saying, "They have no more to learn in their walk with the Lord, or at least nothing that YWAM can teach"? Of course, it is humbling to have to take six months and attend a course that many 18-year-olds attend; especially since it has such an uncool name! It doesn't sound academic, or professional, or upscale in any way. And you have to do work duties!

To consent to attend DTS requires admitting, "I have much to learn. I am willing to be treated the same way as people with much less experience, education, and social standing than I do. I am willing to bow to the requirements of this mission, trusting that God has led and is leading the leaders. Even



though it costs me, I want to leave my extended family, my job, my church and my cultural nest for a time and sit at the feet of God. I want to learn of Him, directly but also through my brothers and sisters in YWAM. God is calling me to this mission, and I want to identify with what He is doing in and through it."

There is something in this leaving all to follow the way of the Nazarene that since the beginning of the Church has proved crucial in breaking the ties to the old life and comforts and preparing the servant of the Lord to hear from Him in a clearer way, to better discern His purposes, to better love His People and His World.

The pastors, missionaries, doctors, and professors who have chosen to lay down their professional titles and become students in a DTS have so often had a sweetness, a gentle humility about them that blesses us all.

And as the University of the Nations, all the leadership is committed to maintaining the DTS requirement. One of our goals is to learn how to love the Lord with our minds; and learning from Jesus requires a humility of heart and and of thought. DTS can be a big step in the right direction.

These are some of the reasons that I believe that DTS is a God-given gift to YWAM.

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