

Becoming an Expert from the Middle



As we approach this time together, I'd propose four primary goals:

1. That we increase our competency to relate to leaders in the underserved communities of my city. Many of you have already related to at least 20 such leaders.
2. That we become comfortable in helping meet a variety of needs reflected among our inner-city church leaders
3. That we become familiar with a framework for partnering with these inner-city leaders. We call this the Circle of Hope.
4. That we become more familiar with the tools that Cru has developed to empower the leaders who are making a significant difference in their community

I was thinking about some of the core issues of being a servant to pastors in your city. Recognize that each pastor is different. Each has different needs, each has different communities. Therefore, how can we serve each uniquely?

In addition, over the years we (Cru) have seen that churches can benefit from a variety of tools. Therefore, we have either developed or discovered an assortment of tools to meet the needs expressed by nearly 2,000 partner ministries around the country.

You have probably asked the questions, as our staff and I have, *how do I learn enough about the tools to represent that tool or the corresponding training to the pastors? How can I serve the pastors effectively after the initial exposure or training?*

Let me share a concept that has served me well over the last 37 years here in NYC. I call it

Becoming an "Expert" from the Middle

First, how do you become an expert? Most of us assume that you need extensive training or extensive exposure to (in this case) a ministry dynamic.

Let's look at what it means to be an expert in business:

Example A – Bill Bright – how to go into business

Bill was asked what it would take to be successful as a business person. He paused and said, "First, I wouldn't get an MBA (typical way to become an expert). Instead I'd find the most respected business person I know and offer to be their assistant for a year.

"You'd learn more than any school could teach and if you were serious and a real servant to this leader, you'd be offered a job at higher pay than if you came merely with academic training."

This is one way I've suggested to young men wanting to go into the pastorate.

Example B – Turning Point in NYC

I was confronted with an opportunity and a dilemma some years ago. I had heard about Turning Point, a program offered by Teen Challenge. I was hesitant to offer the training because I didn't feel confident in the area of drug rehab.

I had a conversation with a leader of faith-based discipleship programs dealing with addictions, whom I respect most. He asked, "When are you going to host Turning Point training?" "But I'm not an expert!" I countered.

He responded with the same question, “*When* are you going to host the training?” As if he hadn’t heard my objection. He felt that Cru’s interactions with pastors was the needed ingredient to help church leaders deal with the growing drug epidemic in the late ‘80s in NYC. He wanted us to connect the pastors to the “drug rehab experts,” e.g., Turning Point trainers.

Over the next 5 years we facilitated the training of over 100 churches in how to host groups within their churches to help people overcome life-controlling issues such as drug addiction.

In other words, we knew churches. We knew the expert trainers. We simply put them together.

I would humbly say that I became an expert in drug rehab through that experience. As a matter of fact, I think I came to understand the breadth of gospel-based drug abuser discipleship better than some who had conducted in-house rehab for years.

I heard some “experts” say, you must get the abusers *out of their community*. Others said you must work with the abusers *in their community*. Who was right? They both were speaking from their situation which they knew well

Characteristics of One Growing as an Expert

Curiosity – particularly about what is God doing in churches and their communities. What we have the privilege of doing, college researchers would go to graduate school and pay much money to do.

Invest your awkwardness -

As servants of pastors in at-risk communities, we will feel awkward at times. We will be presumed to know more than we do. When we are asked something we can’t answer adequately, it makes us feel awkward. What if we’re trying to present a training concept when we’ve not had personal experience with it? Admitting that I don’t know something, but being willing to admit it and research the answer, makes the information stick in my brain. It also gives pastors the picture that we are “real people.”

Personal involvement –

Wherever and whenever possible, we should experience the training or the tool in question. (e.g., a Turning Point group)

The Long View –

We will make mistakes. We will learn from those mistakes (Hebrews 5:14).

A principle of response to our ministry among those with life-controlling problems is “delayed salvation syndrome.”

What Keeps Us from Realizing Expertise?

1. Pride –

Example: The “I Found It!” pastor

My first month in NYC was one of the most humbling of my life. A pastor sensed my newness and didn’t hesitate to broadcast it. Now I have stayed long enough to be like that pastor to others.

2. Forgetting the gospel –

We must remind ourselves that we will be proud. Others will be proud. Therefore we must bask in the unconditional love of the Savior.

Glen Kleinknecht
6/28/13