

# ALL CHRISTIAN'S FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

## JESUS' LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

In John 17, Jesus reported to the father that their strategy was going to be successful. Why was Jesus optimistic about this? He was facing the cross, the betrayal of Judas and the falling away of the disciples. What was the basis of his confidence? Consider three possible reports Jesus could have presented:

Report Number 1: our strategy will work because within the first year huge crowds were following Me. I could not get away from them. They clamoured for me to speak to them and even left their homes and jobs to hear Me preach. There was great response and popularity.

Report Number 2: the strategy will work because in the near future, Pentecost will take place. Thousands are going to believe during just one week of time. Therefore, the strategy will work because of the large number of believers who will exist after Pentecost.

Report Number 3: the strategy will work because of the loyalty of the core disciples. These are the ones who have lived with me in community. I have taught them and lived with them. They know I have come from You, Father! Our strategy will work because of these faithful and committed leaders.

Which report sounds most promising and logical? In light of many traditional church growth methods, Report one or two would appear to have the best chance of success. Both reports have sufficient numbers either at the beginning or the end of the process to forecast expectations of success.

However, Jesus confidently gave the third report to the Father. *Jesus had a leadership strategy, not a crowd strategy or a numbers strategy.* Over the past several decades, Robert Coleman has been one of the clearest voices trumpeting the importance of Jesus' leadership strategy. He says, "Leadership was the emphasis. Jesus had already demonstrated by His own ministry that deluded masses were ripe for the harvest, but without *faithful* and *responsible* spiritual shepherds to lead them, how could they ever be won?"

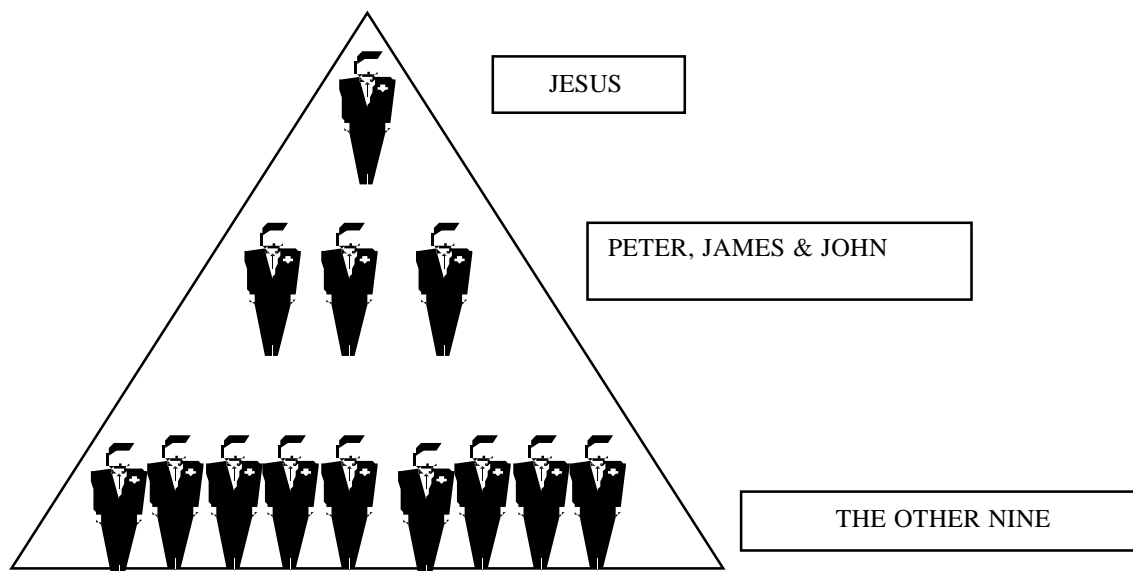
Coleman also observes "What good would it have been for His ultimate objective to arouse the masses to follow Him if these people had no subsequent supervision nor instruction in the Way? It had been demonstrated on numbers of occasions that the crowd was an easy prey to false gods when left without proper care..."

For this reason, unless Jesus' converts were given competent and faithful men of God to lead them on and protect them in the truth they would soon fall into confusion and despair, and the last state would be worse than the first. Thus, before the world could ever be permanently helped, men would have to be raised up who could lead the multitudes in the things of God.

Notice the leadership triangle below. At the top of the triangle is Christ, the catalyst or innovator. At the second level of the triangle are the inner circle Peter, James and John. On the

base line of the triangle are the remaining nine members of Jesus core leaders. *The extended family members are around this core group.*

### DIAGRAM



In this leadership context, Jesus related to His leaders in several ways. At times, He related to them one on one, as He did with Peter, Thomas, John, Phillip and even Judas. He also related to the twelve as a unit. Much of His teaching was to the Twelve; He often took them away from the crowds in order to be with them. In a study of the gospel of Mark, Jim Egli has suggested that 49% of the book of Mark is given to the time Jesus spent with His disciples.

Coleman adds, ‘one cannot help but observe in this connection that the references to “*the disciples*” as a corporate body are much more frequent in the Gospels than are reference to an individual disciple... When it is remembered that these accounts were written under inspiration by the disciples, and not Jesus, it is quite significant that they would set forth their own place in such terms. We need not infer from this that the disciples were unimportant as individuals, for such was not the case, but it does impress us with the fact that the disciples understood their Lord to look upon them as a body of believers being trained together for a common mission’.

The disciples related to each other on a one to one basis. Sometimes these relationships were not good. For instance, as they moved toward Jerusalem for the last time, they were upset with each other. James, John and their mother were trying to gain advantage over the rest. Jesus, leadership triangle allowed personal contact with each other, both good and bad. This approach to leadership provided Jesus with many teachable moments to instruct, encourage and admonish His disciples.

Jesus also frequently related to the three in His inner circle. He took Peter, James and John with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration. When He healed the daughter of Jairus, Peter, James and John also entered the room with Him while the others remained outside. The last time Jesus was with His disciples before His death was in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, He physically arranged the disciples in this leadership framework. He left the nine at the outermost point, took the three inner circle of Peter, James and John in deeper with Him. Then He went further into the Garden. On the last night He was with them, Jesus modelled how He had been relating to His leaders for the past three years.

Coleman notes 'within the select apostolic group Peter, James and John seemed to enjoy a more special relationship to the Master than did the other nine...So noticeable is the preference given to these three that had it not been for the incarnation of selflessness in the Person of Christ it could well have precipitated feelings of resentment on the part of the other apostles. The fact that there is no record of the disciples complaining about the pre-eminence of the three, though they did murmur about other things, is proof that where preference is shown in the right spirit and for the right reason offence need not arise'.