

Making Disciples Via Lego Connections

You may not have heard of Filipino pastor Joey Bonifacio, but his LEGO Principle—a simple yet profound discipleship model—could change the American church

When Jesus spoke of the church, He never said to have stirring Sunday morning services, an amazing praise and worship team, or even a good nursery. Yet those are the elements countless congregations focus on the most.

No, when Jesus commissioned those who would follow after Him, He chose two words amid all the other instructions He could've offered: *Make disciples*.

That's the subject of this month's issue of *Ministry Today*. We have been doing the digital issue online and on the iPad as an experiment. But so far it hasn't caught on. So rather than lose \$50,000 a year, we're trying something else. You can now get all the content of *Ministry Today* starting January 1 under a "Ministry Today" tab on our Charisma News app. That is free and we have advertisers nearly standing in line. Last month we had more than 1.4 million page views. *Ministry Today* will only add to that. Plus it's super cheap and fast and easy to have in your hand.

So enjoy this digital issue that you can "swipe" on the iPad with embedded videos and all sorts of special effects. Because this is the last one! We may do it again if there is a demand. But our vision is to serve the body of Christ with useful materials for leaders (like the insights on Discipleship of Joey). Our goal is not to have all the bells and whistles technology offers.

Meanwhile, read how we're addressing how churches can create a culture of discipleship that produces true disciples of Christ

rather than mere “churchgoers.” I can think of few people more qualified to make the case for establishing this than Joey Bonafacio from Manila, Philippines. Joey is one of the senior pastors at Victory Church, a community of more than 65,000 believers who eat, breathe and live out the core principle of discipleship everyday. Joey’s also the author of a recently released book, *The LEGO Principle*, which reveals the key elements of connecting with God and connecting with people.

You may have never heard of Joey—after all, he lives halfway around the world. But I believe you will in the future.

That’s primarily because many Christians are aware that we’re missing something today when it comes to forming relationships and mentoring believers on how to be more like Christ. Sadly, that’s why we see so many people make a decision to follow Jesus but then fall by the wayside. They desire to go after God, but they never develop deep roots. As Jesus described in His Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-22), when these hearers of the Word are assaulted by a culture that is increasingly anti-Christian, they become “scorched” and wither away.

When Joey ministered recently at Northland, A Church Distributed, the largest evangelical church in central Florida, the congregation responded positively. Joey was able to connect the dots for them regarding discipleship—or maybe I should say he connected the Legos. His message of forming deep relationships resonated with the audience so much the church’s bookstore sold out of his book afterward.

If you’re old enough, you may remember the Discipleship Movement of the 1970s and ’80s that ended poorly and tainted many people’s view of discipleship. But the discipleship Joey refers to isn’t about a “shepherd” giving you his approval to date someone or change jobs. In fact, this version is so void of authoritarian leadership models that many of Victory’s pastors can walk through the crowds before a church service without being recognized. At Victory, the only true leader is

Jesus; everyone else is a disciple charged with making other disciples.

Joey believes this discipleship culture—which builds real relationship and values people as individuals, not just faces in the pew—produces true disciples who, in turn, will change the world.

I met Joey in Korea a couple of years ago at a networking meeting of Christian leaders. He told me about his concept of the Lego principle, which uses the child's toy as a word picture to describe how we were made to connect to God and to one another. Since both my sons were crazy about Legos and I'd spent hours playing with them with my boys, I understood the idea.

He gave me a copy of his manuscript and I was sold. Though he expands on different facets of the toy and its manufacturer, his basic principle remains simple yet profound. I believe he has found a key the church needs—which is why we ended up publishing his book.

Because discipleship is a topic we've not dealt with extensively in *Ministry Today*, I also invited Joey to be guest editor and to include his wide circle of influence as authors. He is part the International Apostolic Team of Every Nation Ministries, which I've admired for years. I've had close friends who were discipled by Every Nation and I've seen good fruit from how they do things.

My hope is that you'll be inspired by what you read here and want to read *The LEGO Principle*. I believe you'll be hearing more about Joey. And I hope he's able to inspire American pastors to focus on discipleship just as another Asian pastor of a large church—Yonggi Cho of Korea—influenced the church 25 years ago regarding church growth.

Have you signed up for my twitter feed:@sstrang.

Next week, I'll feature Berin Gilfillan of International School of Ministry and later Abraham Lincoln's original Thanksgiving Proclamation in the Strang Report. Share this with your friends on Facebook and Twitter and help me build my readership.

Leave your comments on our digital magazines, or *The Lego Principle* or what I've said about Joey.