



# The Update

Black Sea Port, Sevastopol, Crimea

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## Who in the World is the “First Team”?!

After decades of working with leaders, and potential leaders, we have observed that trying to build strong teams of leaders without the marriages of those teams being strong is counterproductive. The “team” that needs primary attention is the marriage team; it is the *first team*. So nearly ten years ago we developed some marriage training, that was specifically designed for leaders.

Foundational to all Christian leadership is Jesus’ teaching that leadership in the Kingdom is all about serving others, not being served. Paul picks up this theme in Ephesians, teaching that the foundation of a marriage is mutual submission (“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” 5:21). From the original creation in Genesis, man and woman were created equal partners in access to God (correcting the Pharisees, Jesus admonishes, “in the beginning it was not so...” Matt. 19:4) and it actually takes *both* genders to accurately represent God. Both were created in His image and together they best reflect his personhood.



In order to be consistent with our leadership training, in the *First Team* seminar we apply what mutual submission actually means within the marriage relationship. It is to be a safe, nurturing place where neither the man nor the woman is to dominate the other, but rather to serve each other as if serving Christ. As with our other servant-leadership training, this is often counter cultural, as Jesus’ Kingdom values are in stark opposition to those of this world.

*(continued on page 2)*



First Leader’s Marriage Training in Russia 2010

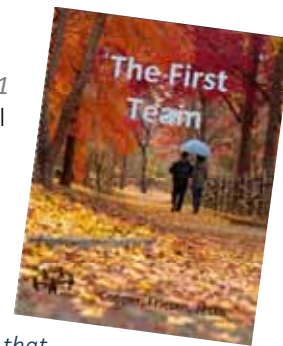


First Leader’s Marriage Training in Latin America (Dominican Rep.) 2018

# Who in the World is the “First Team”?!

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Since first introducing this material, our network of coaches have continued to use this material as premarital teaching, couples coaching, and one-on-one counselling. Tanya, who is from Moscow but serves in various capacities in Russia, sent the following to our office:



Tatiana (Alexey)

Dear Phil and ICM team,

Thank you for this marriage material, it is my favorite one and I use it a lot. I collect student's reflections after my seminars, so I have some understanding of the impact of the material. One pastor from Yakutsk wrote that the biggest impression from the seminar was the idea that women were created according to the image of God. Hallelujah!

I use it in my class for the pastoral or ministerial training. I also have a class on family in the on-line course that is called, “Family and Marriage.” One part of it is about harmonisation of ministry and family from your First Team material. So, it is used multiple times when on-line students take it. Now it is even “beyond my control,” as the course has taken on a life of its own as others all over are now using it.

Our traveling to various parts of Russia has been significantly reduced due to pandemic. Many churches do not gather for anything but Sunday service. Just two latest activities I held offline were Women Conference in the small town of Kostroma last September in one of the churches there and a Family seminar with Alexey in the Moscow region in March. About 40 couples participated. It was Saturday retreat, with my presentation on the Biblical foundations of marriage (covenant) and Alexey's presentation on the art of listening. We include various practical exercises to get the couples to work together. Later we had time with the pastor and leaders, and discussed how to work with the families and the younger generation.

I am planning to develop an on-line program for counseling and family training and it's in the process of discussion with our partners. We want to develop it in such a way that it will be self-supported and focused on equipping leaders to work with families in the church and outside the church. Due to the pandemic, many families are experiencing many challenges and difficulties and so we are receiving even more requests for family ministry.

Tanya, MCNet Coach, Russia

Maxym and Anya organized a marriage seminar several years ago in Ukraine. At that time, Phil and Nancy participated in launching the materials in that country with a group of couples. Maxym recently sent the following report:

According to statistics every other marriage in Ukraine ends with a divorce. In Churches the situation is not as bad, though far from good. Many couples struggle with unresolved conflicts and various marriage issues. Pastoral couples experience a double stress because of the (felt) need to be role model for other couples in Church. The added stress sometimes even results in health issues in either the husband or wife, or both.

The First Team material that Phil and Nancy presented a few years ago in Ukraine turned out to be a great tool to use with the leaders and lay couples in churches. The workshop helped to establish right priorities. The manual showed how to serve one's own family, and gave some good tools to access quality marriage relationships and deal with specific issues.

In a way, First Team became a challenge for some husbands who were used to serving others, but not their own families. It challenged theological thinking about what "head" in the family means and gave better perspectives for those who were open to learning and changing.

We were able to use the marriage workshop in various training occasions for couples in the last few years reaching more than 50 families. Personally, we were able to use the materials to serve several families as their marriage mentors. In this case we went a bit deeper and helped families to cope with specific challenges and get back on God's track for marriage.



Maxym & Anya



What I personally like about the First Team materials is the focus on servant leadership. As Christians we need to learn to practice it first in our own marriages and families and then in churches and local communities, not vice versa!

Maxym and Anya,  
MCNet Coaches, Ukraine

Phil & Nancy, Maxym (far left pic),  
Marriage Conference, Ukraine 2017



# Discipling the Nations (in a Pandemic)

It has been encouraging to see our partners continue to focus on fulfilling Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus’ last command to his Church: to make disciples of all people groups. And this in spite of a global pandemic and many personal and family challenges. Several years ago Doug Friesen (President of CLIMB, Canadian partner of MCNet Intl.) and Phil Jeske wrote a discipleship guide (*Discipling thru Intentional Relationships*) that was designed to help walk a new believer through the basics of being a disciple of Jesus – from salvation to sanctification; basic spiritual disciplines to living a life of faith; a practical understanding of the believers relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as helping the disciple of Jesus understand and find their place in the body of Christ.

Since being translated into several languages, this resource has been used in various countries as a small group study, as well as a



Sharing a meal w/ Pastor Mikhail in 2011

relational tool for a one-on-one relationship. Over ten years ago, Phil spent several years travelling to the Crimea (which was then part of Ukraine) and coaching Pastor Mikhail and his wife and their team. Once Crimea became part of Russia in 2014, and Phil was no longer granted a visa to Russia, travelling to this beautiful region along the Black Sea was no longer possible. However, Alexei, a coach in our Network (from Moscow), has been travelling to this region and watering the seeds that were first planted in this region by Phil some ten years ago.



Church in Sevastopol

Recently, Pastor Mikhail gathered five churches in his region and together they funded printing several hundred copies of these Discipleship Guides and Alexey joined them to launch this material in their churches. Our ministry recently received this email from Alexey:

*Greetings from Sevastopol [Crimea]!*

*I am here for three days to do another seminar on Discipleship and Mentoring (previous one I did in November for students of their Bible school and now they gathered pastoral teams of 5 churches. Mikhail, his bishop and leaders of four churches gathered because they see discipleship and mentoring as an important emphasis in their further churches development. The seeds that Phil planted 10 years ago were not fast to bring fruits, but presently it is happening!*



Alexey

It is really exciting to see the fruit of our labors and your prayers and support taking root in this region. Our ministry has also provided materials to Greg, a missionary in Kenya, who we introduced to you in the last Update. He had received our Mentoring (*Mentoring thru Intentional Relationship*) materials at a mission conference several years ago and had begun equipping his young leaders using these materials. He was interested in our other materials and so we sent him a digital copy of our Discipling materials for new believers. Recently he sent the following email to our office:



*Hi Phil*

*So, the mentoring process (Mentoring thru Intentional Relationships) is going awesome, as usual, with our leaders....every time it is so wonderful and we all learn a lot from one another.*

*On Saturday nights, we have been doing a Discovery Group ...for around a year we have been using some materials to do a course on character, which has been great and created full participation. It used biblical principles to teach good character and life skills, but does not use the bible directly. For some time I have not been totally thrilled with the fruit of what came out of it.*

*So last Saturday we began with your materials – Discipling through Intentional Relationships. It was so great....began in Chap 1.0 with Salvation and we separated into 3 groups with 21 attendees. Everyone participated so much and loved it and didn't want it to end. Tonight will be our second kick at it and I'm excited for it. It's a great format and it's working so well for us. Thanks again bro!!*



Pastor Greg

*In love and appreciation*

*Greg (Seas of Life Missions Kenya)*



▲ Seas of Life Missions team, Kenya

Women's Study Group ➤

# From My Desk



Phil Jeske, PhD  
President



## Our Mission

Serving the church by mentoring and coaching ministry teams.

## Our Purpose

Our goal is to see another generation equipped so that they may be relevant witnesses in their culture. We accomplish this through mentoring leaders, coaching and consulting with ministry teams, and providing culturally relevant materials that facilitate this process.

## Accountability

ICM is an interdenominational non-profit charity registered in both Canada and the USA. It is a faith mission and supported by free-will donations of those of like vision.

ICM adheres to the WEF & Lausanne Covenants statements of faith and takes an evangelical approach to Scripture.

**THE UPDATE** is the bi-monthly newsletter of ICM, Canada.

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Recently we have just celebrated the most important fact of our faith – the Resurrection! For most of us it was, again, quite different than our typical in-person community celebration, Of course, this does not diminish the reality of what Jesus’ resurrection means for each of us, as well as our world as a whole (though they may not know it). I think the last year has served to remind us all again of what is truly important and essential in our life of faith. It is so easy for us to gain strength and hope from so many other (good) activities and all the support networks that we had become accustom to, but had little or no access to in the last year. Yet we have discovered afresh that even if everything else is stripped away, if we have Jesus, that is enough. If we have Him, we have all that we need.

Having our normal support systems stripped away, kind of reminds me of some thirty years ago when we first moved to Africa (and to a lesser degree ten years later when we moved to Berlin). Moving to another culture, country and language makes one realize the whole system of supports that one had become accustom to in one’s home country. All of a sudden, in a new context none of these initially exist. There is a whole new set of rules of how everything works. Everyone else seems to intuitively know these (as we did in our own country), but they are strange to us as foreigners.

In our own culture/country we can rely on family, friends and know where the best place is to shop, how to pay bills and all the other daily things that make life manageable. It takes time, but anyone who moves to another country/culture (and stays for any length of time), eventually develops a new system of supports and become accustom to the new way of doing things. This process of adaptation (becoming a “TCP – Third Culture Person”) changes us to see the world with different eyes and gain a new appreciation of what we had and what our true values are.

During the last year, it has seemed a bit like we were living in a different place with new rules and even new values. This is very disorientating at the best of times, but add in the stripping away of our “go to” support networks of family, friends and things that help us decompress, it is no surprise that so many have, and are, struggling. Yet, as believers, hopefully we have dug deep and discovered afresh that the Lord and our relationship with him has not changed. It is only He that can gives us stability in the midst of any culture, country, personal tragedy – or global pandemic.

If this pandemic would have lasted only a couple of weeks I suspect it would not have changed us much. However, due to the depth and length of the change of our “new normal” we have been forced to re-evaluate what is really important to us. While this can be a painful process, it can ultimately produce good fruit in our lives. Even if everything else is stripped away, we can gain strength in the reality of our relationship with our risen Lord. As our faith is tested we can come to peace in the knowledge that he will work all things together for our good (even if we can’t understand how).

As with moving to another country, I have found it a helpful to consider what has forever changed in my own life, and in our ministry, over the last year. While some things may never really go back to “normal,” this is not necessarily a net negative, but can be a positive reboot as we move forward. This process produces character and gives us the faith to help others moving forward; we can become better disciples of Jesus – having been refined as fine gold.

## Partnering Together

- Please find enclosed my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Resources/Materials for Pastors/Leaders \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to join the team as a monthly partner:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_/month
- Conference Expenses for Pastors/Leaders \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send info regarding Donating Electronically

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