

# THE ODYSSEY

a wandering and eventful journey with God

July 4, 2007

Dear Supporter,

I'm looking at a 13-point checklist called "The Winning Fundraising Letter." I got it at a workshop. Honestly, it looks like a lot of spin.

Instead, if you will, give me a few minutes to share what's up.

We're at a critical intersection right now.

I thought you would want to know.

## → God's Unfolding Faithfulness

In 2004, after 18-years of full-time pastoral ministry, I started a ministry committed to discipling the next generation.

That fall I sent a letter to a small database of friends and family. In less than six weeks, you responded with \$125,000—*exactly*

You helped launch real life change for over 1000 people so far!

Today, we are at a critical growth point in our ministry.

We have incredible opportunities, but we lack the resources to respond.

A word about what's been happening.

## → How the Ministry of Theodyssey Grows

Theodyssey works like "ant dust."

When ants track through a white, dust-like powder, and get it on their feet, they end up tracking it back into their nest. In that way, the whole nest gets infected.

Similarly, when someone comes alive spiritually— when he or she gets "dust on their feet"— they take it back into their church and family, where the change in their life begins to significantly impact others.

Last year, a local pastor called me to ask about a staff member who was taking a Theodyssey class. The conversation went something like this:

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm the senior pastor at \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm calling about one of our staff members who is taking your class."

"You must be talking about \_\_\_\_\_."

"Yeah. I have known him for over 10 years. In fact, I personally disciplined him when we first worked together."

"What can I help you with?"

"In all my years of ministry, I have never seen anyone's life change as much as his in just a few months. I'm calling to see if we can get together. I'd like to find out more about what you do."

Ant dust.

It's "viral." No selling. No hype. No spin.

It simply spreads from person to person.

churches. Fifteen other churches invited us to start groups, but we didn't have enough leaders

We didn't solicit any of these Churches.

Chalk it up to. . . ant dust.

Bottom line: we're after deep change in people's lives. And we have a significant opportunity to MULTIPLY our efforts. We need a full-time leadership coach to equip a new generation of leaders that we are raising up.

But first things first. We need to develop our capacity to fund the next level of ministry.

## → Here's why We Need Your Help Now

**We're at a crucial growth point.**

If we want to expand our ministry to others, we have to expand our resources to support it.

Think of it as a pair of inverted triangles. If we want to expand our influence, the supporting foundation also has to grow.



Our board has decided to hire a **full-time Financial Development officer**, who will help build a resource base that will support a spiritual formation ministry to the next generation.

This person will raise funds through building an expanded donor base, foundation grants, special giving opportunities (e.g., trusts), and developing a solid and growing relationship with our present Theodyssey partners, like yourself.

They will also help market our new curriculum, which is a potential source of significant revenue that can be used to expand our ministry to thousands.

Many non-profits have such a person.

It's kind of like hiring a chicken to lay eggs, so we can hatch more chickens.

## → We're Asking You to Step Out in Faith With Us

We have a cash balance of about \$11,000.

That's all we have.

So hiring a full-time staff person might seem fairly insane.

**We're calling it "faith."**

In order to fund this new position (including benefits and expenses) we will need to raise an additional \$8,500 per month.

*That's a lot.*

Here's what God has put on our hearts most recently:

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

Our board is leading by example. By faith.

They have just committed **over \$25,400** for the remainder of 2007.

Honestly, it feels deceitful to make up a number that we are aiming for. Suffice it to say, there is a significant cost to taking next steps.

Please help us!

**Our ability to disciple the next generation is at stake.**

Here's what we ask:

Please humbly go before God and ask Him if this is something He wants you to invest His resources in (after all, everything you have is His).

And then be faithful in doing whatever He tells you.

Don't be surprised if God asks you give in ways that exercise great faith. He may speak to a number of unlikely people to do just that. See what He impresses upon your heart.

## → Ways You Can Help

1. **Become a financial partner**, if you haven't already. Give a one-time gift or a monthly tithe and support us as missionaries to the next generation.
2. **Increase your regular commitment**. See if God invites you to take next steps in your giving.
3. **Give a special gift**. This would be above and beyond your regular support.

You can use the enclosed giving envelope, or conveniently give online through our secure, privacy-protected web service at [www.TheodysseyGroup.org](http://www.TheodysseyGroup.org)

We need your help today!



With Gratitude,

David Smith  
Lead Navigator

**P.S.**

This unique time in history requires a unique approach. We're doing something unusual. ..together. Thanks for being a part of it!

## A Letter From Our Chairman

FROM THE DESK OF  
**SCOTT RALEY**

On behalf of the board, we thank each of you for your faithfulness to the mission of Theodyssey.

Together we have planted a new, vital ministry which God has blessed, and brought light to many Christ followers. We deeply appreciate you joining us on this journey of faith and for investing in the spiritual lives of others.

As a board, we share a unity of purpose and vision. Together, we are proud to be called to serve with our time and talents and to give with the resources God has blessed us with.

We are being challenged, just like you, to go before God and ask for His help to see His kingdom come. Each of you is key to fulfilling the needs we have prayed for.

Again, thank you for your past support and consideration of our current request.

Go with God,

**Scott Raley**

Scott Raley  
Chairman,  
Theodyssey Group



**Theodyssey  
Board:**

**Scott Raley\***  
**Beth Clifford**  
**Bob Nielsen**  
**Ben Slick**  
**David Smith**  
**Joe Sommers**  
**Jim Williams**

## A Word About Why Theodyssey Matters

### **#1** God is using us to make a life-changing difference in the lives of 20-somethings.

Here's an email I got a few months ago:

Hi-

I was at \_\_\_\_\_ this past weekend when you talked on forgiveness during the night service. At this point in my faith, I'm a slightly cynical, not very often church going Christian who longs for an authentic faith walking in the way of Jesus, but on most days I'm pretty unwilling to engage in my spiritual life. I have fought against an emotion driven faith and the evangelical Christian church that seems to be only interested in promoting that type of faith experience. Imagine my surprise when the words you were speaking cut into the very deepest parts of me. I grew up in a very functioning but very alcoholic home. My mom was an alcoholic for most of my growing up years. She now is about 5 years sober, I'm now 27, and about 2 years ago moved back in with my parents. I have lived with a lot of what I feel is righteous anger mixed with a strong pride in what my mom has done to turn her life around. But as a space was created Sunday night to really get honest with myself, I was able to name this underlying resentment that seems to eat me up everyday. I walked away from church Sunday night with more questions than answers but a real stirring in my soul...one that hasn't been felt for a number of years. I'm sorry to dump this here, but what I'm wanting is some help dealing with this.

What do you think it's like to be a 20-something in today's world?

Think about *their* experience of culture.

**The word on the street is that there is no God.** No absolutes. Create your own reality. Whatever works for you is what's true. Literally, anything goes

Next, consider the background of a majority of this generation.

Over half come from a divorced home or single parent family. (Ever read the long-term studies about the effects of divorce?)

One in three women by age 18 has been sexually abused; one out of every six men. Stop and think about this:

*What is it like for them to carry the effects of that around in their soul?*

**Most 20-somethings see church as an irrelevant institution,** full of uninspired and unchanged people that they don't want to be like.

The question: As a 20-something, how do you get past your past, and discover who God really is?

Here's what we do.

We saddle up next to 20-somethings and build an *authentic relationship* with them.

We create a forum where they can share their story; where it's safe to air the struggles they wrestle with.

**We have no neat and tidy answers.** Instead, we work through a series of topics that deal with their perspectives on life. Father. Religion. Past. Sexuality. You get the idea.

Deconstructing false ideas, building trust, rekindling hope, and healing wounds are big themes here.

We guide them in being attentive to God's invitations, both through journaling and prayer.

We then walk next to them, encouraging each one to respond to what God is doing in their lives.

It's beautiful.

*But messy.*

## **#2 We have a growing ministry with an audience we didn't anticipate.**

It seems that a lot of people are tired of worship services where the presence of the Holy Spirit is absent, and are worn out by endless programs that consume their time, with little results.

Many Christ-followers are recognizing that their lives are rather *untransformed*.

They're wondering how to get unstuck, and how to experience the power of God in their lives.

*We have a lot of these people in our classes.*

They're pastors, elders, ministry leaders, Baptists, Orthodox, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and more.

The common denominator is that they're searching for something "real."

## **Here's a Brief Update on What We've Been Doing**

**Imago Dei Community**— a thriving next generation church in urban Portland, Oregon, which is innovating new ways to reach the next generation. We've helped to train every level of their leadership in spiritual formation.

**San Jose Classes**— held at Le Petit Trianon Theater, just a block from City Hall. This nine-month spiritual formation class begins its third session this September!

**Certificate in Spiritual Formation**— a nine-month leadership class involving directed study, interactive workshops, and hands-on small group leadership. We just graduated our first class of seven spiritual directors in June.

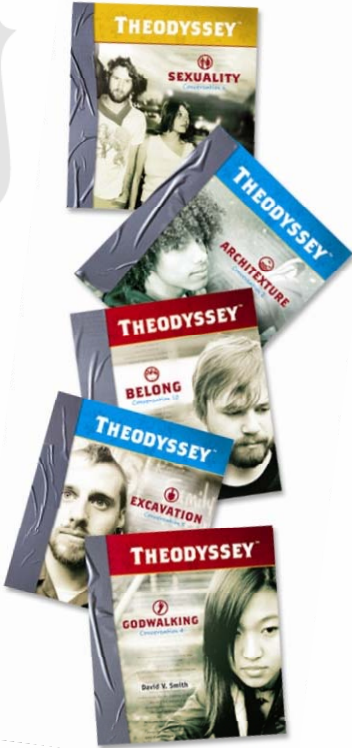
**A.W. Tozer Seminary**— formerly, Simpson University. We teach a four-month Theodyssey course to pastors and ministry leaders each fall, and also at the campus in Redding, summer of 2008.

**Vintage Faith Church**— this emerging church in Santa Cruz, CA is effectively reaching 20-somethings. Theodyssey is a part of their summer School of Theology, and putting together a nine-month spiritual formation class geared toward the university crowd for this fall.

**ServLife Training Institute, Indianapolis, IN**— Theodyssey will be part of training international ministry leaders in spiritual formation at the new ServLife Training Institute in Indianapolis, IN.

**Spiritual Formation Curriculum**— we begin publishing this nine-month spiritual formation curriculum this fall, which includes ten, 50-page workbooks. This is a new set of tools for discipling a new generation.

**And more!**— we have Theodyssey small groups meeting in Portland, Sacramento, and all over the San Francisco bay area.



## The Tale of Two Posters. . .

During college I had two posters in my dorm room.

One was a kitten sleeping inside a waste basket, the chin supported by the top rim. On the front of the can was a picture of a lion. The caption read: "When you dream, dream big."

The other was an old fashioned sailing ship far out at sea. The caption on this one read: "If you want to launch big ships, you have to go where the water is deep."

*Sometimes, the writing on the wall says it all.*