

DIDACHE: “GENERATIONS”
David and Wesley Phillips

Question #1: *What is your current role?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

I am currently serving as the Vice-President for Online Education at Nazarene Bible College in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I have been at NBC for eleven years, following 25 years of pastoral ministry, mostly in Southern California. I now find myself involved in helping to deliver education using Internet technology to those preparing for ministry.

D. Wesley Phillips

I am currently a Masters of Divinity Student at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from Point Loma Nazarene University, I spent one year as a Mission Corps volunteer in the Caribbean Regional Office.

Question #2: *Why did you choose this discipline?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

As a high school student, I sensed what I later came to understand as a call to ministry. While I didn't fully understand all the implications of that call, I did know that it would determine the direction of my life. During a summer camp morning service, a missionary spoke, not about specific ministries, but about a willingness to simply say “yes” to whatever it is that God wants you to do. I responded to that invitation and made a commitment to follow God regardless of where He would take me or how He would call me to serve.

At that time, the call included getting an education and going to college was clearly the next step. Following graduation, I was directed to pastor a small church, serve as a youth pastor, then to pastor another church. Along the way, the call to additional education was clear and I responded while continuing to serve as the pastor of a growing church. Looking back, completing my education was critical in terms of God's ultimate plan for my life.

Consistent with God's previous direction, I developed an interest in helping others prepare to answer God's call in their lives. I did this in the local church as well as at the district level. When the call came to go to Nazarene Bible College, it was easy to make the transition because my past education and experience prepared me for this assignment.

So, in the simplest terms, I chose my current discipline because it is what God prepared me for and called me to do.

D. Wesley Phillips

I didn't really choose to pursue graduate studies in religion, rather it chose me. I just accepted the calling and am trying to faithfully follow it. I graduated from Point Loma with a degree in broadcast journalism with the goal of going into sports broadcasting. After participating in ministry at a church, I began to feel a deeper calling to ministry. For the first time in my life, I was drawn to answer a call to full-time Christian service. During my senior year at Point Loma, I

felt that I needed to experience life on the mission field. After a lot of soul searching and prayer, I decided to complete a year of volunteer work with Nazarene Mission Corps. I went to the Caribbean Regional Office and worked primarily with communication. While serving in the field, I accepted my calling to be a full-time minister and someday, a missionary. Following the call meant more education. Education is a part of the journey and will turn into experience, allowing me to be a better pastor and missionary.

Dr. David M. Phillips

As you envision your calling to missionary work, do you see your undergraduate studies in broadcast journalism as helpful in the things you will be doing in the ministry? What knowledge and skills learned will be especially helpful to you in the future?

D. Wesley Phillips

I think that my undergraduate work in broadcast journalism will help me a great deal. God has used many things in my life to lead me to where I am today. God used my drum playing skills to direct me to a church while I was in college where I served on the worship team. The church took me on a mission trip where I got the idea to call Mission Corps. My experiences in broadcast journalism, in conjunction with the mission trip, led me to the Caribbean Region and the year of service in the Caribbean led me to where I am today. God used those situations to teach me that whatever gifts you have, God will use them if you give Him a chance.

D. Wesley Phillips

Looking back at your life and the things that you have done, did you always feel that you were in the right place doing the right things, or did you ever have a feeling that God had more in store for you? Do you feel settled now or do you feel that God has more big steps planned for your future?

Dr. David M. Phillips

There have been a number of times that while I believed I was doing the right thing, I sensed there was something more that God was leading me to. It was a sense that while the current work was right for the time, it was also preparation for another stage in my life. As I look back, most of what I have done in life prepared me for what I am doing now.

Does God have something else for me? I don't know! Right now, things seem to be very much in place and I can't imagine where this could lead. However, that has always been a part of the excitement – to see what could come next.

Question #3: *What key contributions does your discipline offer?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

I am convinced that there has never been a time when having an educated clergy is more important. We are living in a day when many people are entering the ministry as a second career and serving in bi-vocational settings. As such, many who need an education cannot accomplish that in a face-to-face educational environment. Being able to deliver a quality educational

experience online is providing not only the opportunity to learn but the means to acquire an education.

D. Wesley Phillips

Being a student is very important, because it is through studying and asking questions that important answers are found. Many great truths were passed from Jesus to the disciples as He answered their questions. It is through students that the study of philosophy, theology, biblical interpretation, etc. is challenged and shaped. The reason you study and learn is not to just get a piece of paper with your name on it, but rather to be more effective in your current and future ministry. What key contributions will I make in the future? I do not know, but I know that they will be much greater because education is preparing me for what lies ahead.

Dr. David M. Phillips

I am impressed with your awareness for the need of education at such a young age. I must admit that I was much older before I realized the immense value in education. Is there anything that you can attribute this awareness to?

D. Wesley Phillips

I realize education is important because I see how important it is to people around me. Growing up, I saw parents who continued their education and were willing to go to great lengths and sacrifices to gain it. I saw my sister and brother go to college and excel in their careers. I have also seen the reverse situation, where people waited late in life to begin pursuing an education and faced added challenges as a result. People have an innate desire to learn. That is why little children ask questions, why we love to watch the Discovery Channel, and why game shows are so popular – there is a want and need for learning inside of all of us.

D. Wesley Phillips

In your work with online education over the past eleven years, what impact have you seen in the lives of your students within the greater Christian world? Have you been surprised by any of the things the students have accomplished or paths they have taken after graduation?

Dr. David M. Phillips

History will be able to tell a better story, but because the online delivery of education has made it possible for students anywhere in the world to get an education and I see many benefiting from it in various world regions. Probably the most significant part of online learning is the immediate impact it has on the ministries of the students and instructors. Participants are often actively engaged in ministry. They bring the real world into the classroom and then take the experience immediately back out into the world. I have also noticed that because learning in this environment is something that can be done while remaining in active ministry, many choose to continue pursuing education and become lifelong learners.

Question #4: *What is the future of your discipline?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

The need for education is going to increase and I believe the specific need for biblical, theological, and practical ministry education is going to increase. The projections concerning

adults returning to college all point to significant increases. There are many who feel that as adults return to college, they will be looking to prepare for something that will make a difference in their world. I believe many will seek to prepare for ministry.

In a 2007 article published by the America Society for Training and Development (ASTD) called, “Real-Time Collaboration”, Sam S. Adkins makes a prediction that by 2016, 75-80% of all US post-secondary students will be full or part-time online students (Adkins). The trends certainly give strength to that prediction, but even if the numbers are not that high, it is evident there is a future in online education.

With the growing desire for ministerial training and online education, I believe there will be a significant need for my discipline in the future.

D. Wesley Phillips

As long as there are sick people, we will always need doctors. In the same way, until Christ returns, we will always need pastors and missionaries. But, they may look differently in the future than they do right now. We must find ways to be effective in the midst of hard economic times. We must figure out new ways to reach and train people. We must continue to bridge the gap in our churches between young and old, rich and poor, and black and white. The future for my generation is exciting because, like the men and women before us, we get to take charge and do what God has called us to do. If there is anything that we have learned from the generations before us, it is that we must put our hope and trust in God. No matter what the obstacle is before us, we must find ways to spread the good news.

D. Wesley Phillips

How is Biblical online education going to impact the church in the future, especially in the worldwide church?

Dr. David M. Phillips

Providing education using Internet technology removes the barrier of distance. There are still some issues related to reliability and accessibility, especially in non-US world regions, but we can provide quality education to students all over the world using the most qualified instructors available. We can also enable students to learn from a multicultural perspective as they study with students from many different places, enhancing their worldview. Most importantly, training does not require relocation to a college campus. We can educate ministers in an effective and challenging way that allows them to immediately apply what they are learning in their current ministries.

Question #5: *What do you see proves a challenge to Wesleyan Higher Education?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

There are two challenges that we are facing in Wesleyan Higher Education today. The first challenge is to help our students understand what it means to be Wesleyan-Armenian. Students are inundated with theological concepts outside of our tradition, and the majority of books, seminars, and online sermons they access are not from a Wesleyan-Armenian background. In

many cases, they use this material without any knowledge of the distinct theological differences. The challenge is to help students understand the significance in the differences.

A second challenge is to make education practical. While it is important for us to provide the academic understanding of what it means to be Wesleyan-Armenian, it is even more important for us to help students understand how this makes a difference in the everyday life of those in the church.

D. Wesley Phillips

I think the biggest challenge for Wesleyan Higher Education is to reach the most people in the most relevant way without losing its purpose and mission. Wesleyan Higher Education must find ways to carry out the *Missio Dei* (Mission of God) by training students with the best technology, in the greatest learning environments, and with the brightest teachers; but most importantly, by keeping the focus on the Bible and on the people to whom we are called to reach. We have to find relative ways to compete with Hollywood, the Internet, and today's culture while we continue to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and reach the world for Christ.

Dr. David M. Phillips

I was impressed with your reference to providing education by using the “best technology ... with the brightest teachers.” One of the great opportunities that we have using technology today is to enable teachers to teach people living in different places without the need to be face-to-face. Students can benefit from the best education available and teachers can expand their realm of influence far beyond their geographical areas.

D. Wesley Phillips

Being able to understand the differences is important. I know that colleges and universities seem to fall into categories or ‘schools of thought,’ and students tend to lean in one direction. How does online education help give students the opportunity to study under teachers that lean in different directions and how does it help the students make their own decisions on these issues?

Dr. David M. Phillips

Most schools have a predominate culture that reflects the history as well as the current thinking of the faculty. There may be some divergent thinking among the faculty, but probably not as much as some would believe. Most online programs, including the one at NBC, use faculty from many schools, as well as practitioners from many different places. NBC currently has 120 adjunct faculty members; 25% teach for other colleges/universities and the rest are educationally qualified practitioners. This provides for significant diversity, which gives students the opportunity to experience different ways of approaching life and ministry.

Question #6: *Where are you hopeful concerning Wesleyan Higher Education?*

Dr. David M. Phillips

I am hopeful regarding Wesleyan Higher Education because I believe the distinct doctrine behind our education is what those inside and outside of our heritage desire the most. It is what

our world needs more than anything else. Our distinctiveness and our ability to deliver this education to people anywhere in the world through the use of online technology are my reasons for hope.

D. Wesley Phillips

I am most hopeful because in all of the pain and suffering, in all the economic hardships and trials, and in spite of all the intolerance and injustice in the world – we still have the same loving God. God is still bringing salvation to this world in extraordinary ways, but God can only do it through the help of His called people. Seeing men and women trained to share the message of Christ is why Wesleyan Higher Education is hopeful to me. It allows me to better serve God in a fallen and seemingly hopeless world. If the education we receive is based on God's plan, then there is no greater hope for the world. As I continue to learn and grow, I get to see the love and grace that John Wesley talked about. I also get to see the struggles and sins that must be overcome in order to become a holy people.

Question #7: *Final words for future “generations?”*

Dr. David M. Phillips

As I look back at my life, I realize that one of the most significant decisions that I made was to continue my education. Education made it possible for God to open the doors He wanted to open in my life. I believe that I am in the place where God wants me, but if I had not furthered my education, I could not serve in this role. I also agree with the thought that remaining effective in our world requires an individual to complete 30 hours of graduate work every ten years. My final words are to continue your education and remain a lifelong learner.

D. Wesley Phillips

The one thing that comes to mind is to tell future generations to keep going. John Wesley's brother, Charles Wesley, once said, “God buries the workmen, but carries on the work.” To be used as God's instrument in the world and to do the work of God is why we keep going. It is why we study, it is why we pray, and it is why we prepare sermons, lectures, and children's church crafts. Just like the generations before us, we are challenged with the task of picking up the torch and carrying on the work. Our hope is to leave the world a better place, full of grace, so that future generations will have something to build on.

Works Cited

Adkins, Sam S. “Real-Time Collaboration.” *Learning Circuits: ASTD's Source for E-Learning*. 2007. 9 April 2009 < http://www.astd.org/LC/2007/0207_adkins.htm>.