

# Compare Training Shepherds by Coaching with Classroom Instruction

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To multiply healthy churches or cell groups, educators provide coaching as well as classroom instruction, according to students' current needs. When to coach or to teach becomes apparent by comparing the two approaches in eight vital areas.

## 1. Physical Factors

### Time Required

*Coaching* as Jesus and Paul did it takes time. Just as newborn babies need personal attention, coaches train new leaders of new flocks as many months as they need it.

*Classroom* schedules, degree requirements and term calendars determine times and duration of training.

### Location and Seating

*Coaching* takes place wherever participants can meet one another face-to-face and interact together.

*Classrooms* are designed mainly for one-way communication by teachers who deliver lectures.

### Sessions and Schedules

*Coaching* sessions are often separated by several days, depending on travel distances, with reading and fieldwork completed by learners between sessions.

*Classrooms* force students to adapt their lives and schedules to fit a program's calendar requirements.

## 2. General Acceptance and Enrollment

### Acceptance

*Coaching* has limited acceptance by theological educators, although it is increasing.

*Classrooms* accept monologue lectures as the norm for teaching.

### Enrollment

*Coaches* train potential leaders who meet biblical qualifications for 'elders,' offering pastoral training to anyone to whom God has given a pastoral gift.

*Classrooms* enroll unmarried youth who meet academic standards but are too immature to meet a biblical requisite for shepherding elders. Thus, they lack the respect enjoyed by mature heads of families.

### Size of Group

*Coaches* keep their coaching groups small enough to listen and respond to each trainee.

*Classroom* teachers normally seek the largest possible attendance.

## 3. Relationships

### Between Instructor and Students

*Coaches* normally show loving care. Paul shed tears over new leaders in training.

*Classroom* instructors' main concern is how well students grasp the subject they are teaching.

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### **Between Students**

*Coaching* encourages interaction between trainees; students may work and travel together.

*Classrooms* allow interaction only for occasional questions and to keep order.

### **With Churches**

*Coaches* train leaders as an integral part of normal church life.

*Classroom* teaching is often isolated from the rest of the Body of Christ.

### **With the Larger Community and Society in General**

*Coaches* keep trainees in touch with events that affect their work, and deal at once with them.

*Classrooms* in an institution tend to shield students from outside influences.

### **Trainer's View of Trainees**

*Coaches* view learners as active workers **who keep** busy shepherding and serving.

*Classrooms* give more attention to scholarship.

### **Formality**

*Coaching* can be either informal or formal, and as firmly structured as any academic course. Coaching immediately applies what one learns, which requires stronger discipline than the classroom does.

*Classroom* formality has a fixed approach to training that emphasizes cognitive content and standard examinations.

### **Organizing**

*Coaching* requires participants to serve in harmony as a team while working with churches.

*Classroom* education specializes within departments, thereby isolating gift-based ministries.

### **Churches' Part in Developing Curriculum and Training**

*Coaching* keeps churches in the training arena, integrating curriculum with dynamic church life.

*Classroom* training in seminaries or bible institutes usually requires only dutiful attendance or a minor role in churches.

### **Teamwork**

*Coaching.* Trainers view small team ministry as the New Testament norm.

*Classroom* instructors seldom teach as a team, and seldom require teamwork by students.

## **4. Recognition of Student's Work**

### **Acknowledge Achievement**

*Coaches* recognize pastoral achievement; learning is evaluated by results in ministry.

*Classroom* instructors praise students who do well on tests and acknowledge good grades with diplomas, degrees, certificates or public honors.

### **Motivation**

*Coaches'* show trainees how to yearn to serve Jesus and His Church, obeying Him lovingly (John 14:15).

*Classrooms* spawn competition for top grades and honors. Unfortunately, competition leads to rivalry, which Scripture lists along with murder, drunkenness and adultery!

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### **Professional Recognition**

*Coaches* value results over formal credentials.

*Classrooms* promise to lead to paid positions and so they offer widely accepted credentials.

## **5. Objectives, Commitments and Responsibility for Training Leaders**

### **Vision**

*Coaches* aim for the results the apostles had; where they mentored leaders, churches multiplied.

*Classroom* educators aim for academic excellence and increased classroom enrollment.

### **Students' Commitment**

*Coaches'* trainees commit to a shepherding ministry from the outset of their training.

*Classroom* students commit to completing units of study or a degree program.

### **Teacher's Commitment**

*Coaches* listen to learn what a student is doing with his church or ministry, to detect current needs and opportunities, and to train accordingly, advising, assigning reading and modeling skills.

*Classroom* teachers are more concerned with students' grasp of specific material.

### **Who Benefits**

*Coaches* help inexperienced leaders begin or expand ministry.

*Classrooms* cater for those who seek mastery of vast amounts of systematic knowledge.

### **Doctrinal Integrity**

*Coaching* is common in *movements* growing out of evangelism, fervent faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit's power and devotion to the Word of God. Their only common false doctrine is new believers' legalism. To grasp God's grace requires maturity and knowledge of His Word.

*Classrooms* in institutions have, historically, bred the most destructive false doctrines.

### **Leadership Expected of Trainees**

*Coaches* evaluate leadership from a church's view. Coaches consider trainees to be leading only when they get folk to do edifying activities — not simply teaching.

*Classrooms* confuse leading with teaching; as a result, few church members become active.

### **Multiplication of Churches, Cells and the Mentoring Process Itself**

*Coaches* train in a way that trainees can imitate and pass on at once, training others who train still others.

*Classrooms* rarely relate instruction to church multiplication; the result is *sterile* churches.

### **Adaptation to Political and Economic Conditions**

*Coaching*. A third of the world's people have little or no access to institutional pastoral training and pastors must be mentored in secret.

*Classrooms* often require 1) affluence to afford campuses, salaries and tuition, 2) enough prior education to handle intensive courses, and 3) flocks that can afford professionally trained clergy.

### **Source of Income**

*Coaches* normally do not seek income from coaching; they coach as a pastoral duty.

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*Classroom* instructors often view teaching as the main duty of a salaried Christian leader.

### **Primary Responsibility for Training New Pastors**

*Coaches* urge shepherding elders to take the responsibility to train new leaders.

*Classroom* faculty members assume primary responsibility for training Christian leaders.

## **6. Teaching Methods and Equipment**

### **Criteria for Using Technology**

*Coaches* model skills that others imitate and pass on, using only equipment available to trainees.

*Classroom* instructors seek the latest technology that budgets allow.

### **Teaching Style**

*Coaches* model pastoral skills and character on the job, interacting with students as they mature.

*Classrooms* prefer lecture, seldom encouraging extensive interaction.

### **Teaching Procedures**

*Coaches* model skills and enable discussion, including these actions:

- Pray for guidance and power to carry out plans.
- Listen to each student report on fieldwork and people's needs.
- Plan what students or churches will do in the next week or two.
- Review studies done.
- Assign new studies. Normally these correspond to each student's plans.

*Classroom* instruction follows research and subject mastery, lesson objectives and organizing material. It seldom aims to help students pass it on immediately to others.

### **Preparation of Teaching Content**

*Coaches'* main preparation often takes place *after* listening to a student's report, to deal with current needs of a student's church, or ministry opportunities.

*Classroom.* Instructors prepare class material and outlines beforehand.

## **7. Applying Teaching Content and Order of Presentation**

### **Application of What Is Taught**

*Coaches* expect immediate application to each new leader's life, family, society or flock.

*Classrooms* expect application in the future, not immediately.

### **Curriculum Taxonomy and Order in which Items Are Taught**

*Coaches* integrate teaching content with church, community or family *activities*, teaching truths as needs arise. *Coaches* classify truths under action verbs, balancing action with abstraction.

*Classrooms* classify truths logically under titles with static nouns, clustering similar concepts.

### **Scope of Focus**

*Coaches* integrate different disciplines to develop persons, projects or church bodies.

*Classrooms* focus on a specific area, well-defined in analytical terms, at any specific time.

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### **Holistic Ministry**

*Coaches* relate education to a variety of current field ministries.

*Classrooms* tend to focus on one area of cognitive truth at a time.

### **Method of Selecting Content**

*Coaches* let trainees choose instruction from diverse sources, as needs require.

*Classrooms* follow rigid, linear curriculum outlines that leave little room to flex.

## **8. Materials and Sources**

### **Use of Materials**

*Coaches* use any relevant material, and let new leaders select options that edify their people at their current stage of development.

*Classroom* assignments follow textbooks written specifically for each subject, limiting learners' options.

### **Authority and Foundations**

*Coaching* builds on the foundation of obedience to Jesus above all else. Jesus tells His followers in Matthew 28:18-20 to make disciples *by teaching them to obey His commands*.

*Classrooms* often consider the foundation of theological education to be knowledge of the written Word, expressed in propositions.

### **Use of Scripture**

*Coaches* view the Bible, especially the New Testament, as God's manual to evangelize, organize, conduct worship, relate to other congregations, train leaders and deploy missionaries.

*Classrooms* employ the Bible mainly as a source of content for teaching and preaching.