

Train New Leaders in the Way that Jesus and His Apostles Did

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In India, house churches are multiplying by the thousands, creating an urgent need to train both more and less educated shepherds. Even though traditional, institutional education cannot meet the need, yet God's Word has the answer. Let us look at what the Bible teaches about *teaching* as it applies to training new leaders in a healthy movement for Christ.

A. A wise teacher lays a foundation of loving obedience to Jesus' commands, just as he told us to do (Matthew 28:18-20). The first church in Jerusalem, empowered by the Holy Spirit, set an example by obeying, from the start, the commands of Christ in their most basic form (Acts 2:37-47). Their motive for obedience was not the Old Testament Law but love for Jesus (John 14:15). The foundation of all life and ministry, according to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, is obedience to His words (Matthew 7:24-29).

B. A wise trainer of leaders has an assortment of studies that apply to different needs. In Matthew 13:52, Jesus said to apply a variety of resources to current situations, "like the head of a household who brings out of his treasure things new and old." This differs from the prevailing, traditional practice of simply teaching a systematic analysis of biblical truth. Jesus brought forth things old and new when He taught "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:38-40).

Jesus and His apostles did not present an outline prepared ahead of time to the new leaders whom they trained. Rather, they taught in response to questions, needs, criticisms and events. New churches in pioneer fields benefit most from such a 'menu' approach to teaching. Like newborn babies, they have different, urgent needs that require immediate attention. The teacher or mentor, like Jesus and Paul, must listen to a new leader and learn the need of his flock, then use a 'menu' to select studies that fit the need.

We taught this in India with a skit about a man who asked a storekeeper for sugar. The retailer argued that sugar is bad for one's teeth and handed the man coffee instead. They argued about this until the buyer left with his hands empty. Theological educators often fail to listen before they teach and offer what they arbitrarily and mistakenly decide that a shepherd needs to give his flock much later if not now.

C. A wise teacher communicates Biblical truth with simple stories. "Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables" (Matthew 13:34). He used stories about common things that left sharp images in people's mind about God and His Kingdom. Jesus' parables are easy to remember and pass on to others. The Holy Spirit uses Bible stories to convict and illuminate both children and adults of all levels of society and educational backgrounds. Most of the *Paul-Timothy* studies that we prepare base their teaching on a biblical story about a person. For example, teaching about faith focuses on Abraham's story. Some professional clergy, monopolizing sacred truth, purposefully use a style of teaching that their flock cannot imitate, thereby stifling the normal flow of God's Word.

D. A wise teacher trains only those who obey the Word of God. Jesus required that His disciples ‘shake the dust’ from their feet and leave people who fail to respond to God’s Word (Luke 9:5). He also told us not to throw our pearls before pigs (Matthew 7:6). Paul and Barnabas turned from people who rejected the good news to those who received it (Acts 13:45-46). We violate this guideline when we continue to proclaim God’s truth to people who merely attend meetings without growing or serving the Lord. However, it is sometimes the teacher who should abandon not the hearers but his method of teaching. Often one sees no growth, because of failing to mobilize believers to serve one another, which Jesus requires of a teacher.

E. A wise trainer of leaders enables them immediately to equip believers in their flocks to instruct and serve one another. Ephesians 4:11-16 reveals the *aim* and *means* of teaching believers. The *aim* is “equipping of the believers for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” The *means* is to enable them to instruct and serve one another in loving harmony, according to the abilities of each one. “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”.

Such interaction is not allowed in most traditional churches. George Patterson recalls how he learned that to ‘build up’ means to strengthen something or add to it. An uneducated Honduran with whom he worked closely told him that he was “dancing with the devil”. He explained, “The devil causes a problem in a town, and we rush to deal with it. Then Satan makes trouble in another church and we dash over there. Then he causes a quarrel in another church and we hurry again to correct it, dancing with the devil.” He suggested, “Let us agree to do two things. First, let us deal with any problem briefly and leave it in God’s hands, never letting it take up more than half of our time. Second, let us not leave a place until we have added something positive. We will win people to Christ, organize a church, enroll pastoral students, or help them begin a ministry that is lacking.”

F. A wise teacher, like Ezra, includes children in important instruction and church life. “Men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel” (Ezra 10:1). Ezra included children in important teaching, as did Moses and other good leaders of God’s people. Ezra instructed the Israelites to confess their sins and end their relationships with idolaters. Their obedience led a great, national, spiritual renewal. It was too important to leave the children out. It is healthy for children to join adults in serious spiritual endeavors.

Traditional teachers are too hasty in separating children out. It is not enough simply to tell children Bible stories during the worship time. Rather let children briefly act out Bible stories for the adults. Thus, the children will know that they are an important part of the church body. The Paul-Timothy studies that we prepare on a topic come in *pairs*: one study is for the new church leader, and another is for children with a Bible story to act out during the worship time.

G. A wise teacher integrates teaching with the other gift-based ministries of the body, harmonized in love by the Holy Spirit. “The body is one and yet has many

members” (1 Corinthians 12:12). Chapters 12 through 14 of 1 Corinthians show how different gift-based ministries must be practiced together in love, coordinated by the Holy Spirit, in the same way that the different organs of our human bodies work together to let our bodies function normally. This happens when leaders allow other believers to share in teaching others, letting them freely practice the many ‘one-another’ commands such as “teach one another,” “correct one another,” “confess our faults to one another,” “bear one another’s burdens,” “forgive one another”, etc. In small groups, good teachers avoid monologues and make it easy for everyone to take part.

H. A wise trainer of leaders teaches in a way that his trainees can imitate at once and can pass to newer leaders. “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Teaching given to new leaders must be reproducible. Wherever the apostles went making disciples and training new leaders the way Jesus said to do, churches *multiplied*. The same thing happens today in most pioneer fields where missionaries and trainers follow these guidelines and pass on “a light baton”. So doing avoids methods that are difficult to imitate, and excludes equipment that is unavailable to their trainees.

I. A wise trainer of leaders finds out what a church is lacking and mobilizes elders to deal with it. “Set in order what is lacking and name elders in each city” (Titus 1:5). A trainer must first listen and verify what are the current needs of each church, then supply through the local leaders what is lacking. Even novice leaders can train newer leaders effectively when trainers supply them with a checklist of the activities that are required of a church by Christ and His apostles. With such a menu of vital ministries, one can easily chart a new congregation’s progress.

Paul-Timothy Leader Training provides such a menu of church activities that are required by the New Testament. *Train and Multiply*® uses a similar menu. Free studies can be downloaded from www.Paul-Timothy.net under these categories:

Paul-Timothy Leader Training Menu Topics

1. Assurance, counseling, visiting	8. Growing in Christ, Christian character
2. Bible, general studies about the Bible, interpretation	9. Historical events of lasting importance
3. Church-planting	10. Love, fellowship, serving the needy
4. Disciple-making	12. Missions
5. Evangelism, salvation from sin, death and hell, baptism	13. Organizing, overseeing
6. Family life	13. Prayer, faith, healing, spiritual warfare
7. Giving, stewardship, bivocational work	14. Teaching in a biblical way
	15. Training leaders
	16. Worship, Lord’s Supper

J. A wise trainer of leaders investigates the outcomes of his teaching. James 1:22 requires believers to be “doers of the Word and not hearers only.” Good teaching is applied immediately in a practical way. When mentor new leaders, ask them first to report what their flock has done in response to prior teaching. The *Paul-Timothy* studies that we prepare have three parts: (1) a Bible study, (2) corresponding activities that the congregation should do during the week, and (3) related activities to do during worship.

K. A wise trainer of leaders helps them to discover for themselves what the Bible says about a particular truth. The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:10-11). We give new leaders the tools to mine the gems in the Word of God. Good students discover God's priceless truths for themselves. Good Bible studies enable students to find biblical truths easily and accurately. The Paul-Timothy studies that we prepare do not tell students simply what the Bible says, but rather where to find it. For example, instead of simply telling people what the Holy Spirit does for a believer, we ask them to discover it for themselves by examining such passages as John chapters 14-16, Acts 2, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 and Galatians 5.

L. A wise trainer of leaders teaches and writes studies that focus on people, avoiding abstract analysis of doctrine. *Paul* kept in mind the persons to whom he wrote his letters, naming them and dealing with specific situations in their churches, in response to questions and reported needs. *Peter* had shepherding elders in mind when he wrote 1 Peter. John wrote, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven... I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him... I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one..." (1 John 2:12-14). We, too, should prepare our lessons with people and their needs in mind. Write studies as though you were writing a letter to a specific person who is typical of those who need your instruction.

M. A wise trainer of shepherds models pastoral skills while teaching, maintaining a balance between classroom instruction and mentoring on the job. "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Our best teaching is often done on the job outside of any classroom. Jesus and His apostles apprenticed new leaders, combining verbal instruction with field work. Jesus taught the crowds by monologue, but he prepared novice leaders, by walking and chatting with them (Matthew 5:1-2). When Paul taught the Ephesian congregation, as reported in Acts 20:7, he did so discussing questions with them, not with a sermon. (The verb in the original Greek is *dialegomai*, to discuss, discourse with, converse with, or discuss a question with another. The context of Acts 20:7 seems cordial and passionate, not a place and time for philosophical monologue, harangue or pulpit oratory.)

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