

MentorNet #34
Train New Leaders the Way Jesus and His Apostles Did

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On-the-job leader training has been found in most church-planting movements*. The way that Jesus and his apostles did it still works well. We choose to call their method *mentoring*.

There are many kinds of mentoring; one person with more knowledge and experience helps others to become successful. Jesus mentored his apostles by listening to them and instructing them on-the-job (Mark 6:30), and the NT apostles did the same for others (2 Tim. 2:2). In church planting movements, mentors seek to empower novice leaders of new churches in a reproductive way. Here are some mentoring basics and practices drawn from Scripture and from observations of church reproduction and cell multiplication in many countries.

Mentoring Basics

Conscientious Christian educators try to maintain a balance between teaching and training. They teach big groups in classrooms and workshops, while they do face-to-face training of individuals, a few at a time. Novice leaders and their new churches or cells have urgent needs that are best met by a mentor who will first listen to them to learn their needs, and then provide instruction that helps to meet those needs.

Wherever the apostles mentored new leaders, churches multiplied, even as they do today on most newly-opened fields (Acts 13:49). If new leaders are not emerging and new churches are not starting, then examine your educational requirements for new leaders. Do your demands discourage willing workers? Can they afford the price? Do they meet the biblical requirements to be a leader even though humanly-imposed obstacles bar them? We believe that God is displeased when men add requirements to those of His Word: “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you” (Deut. 4:2).

The main task in making disciples is to teach baptized believers to obey Jesus’ commands (Matt. 28.20), motivated by their love for him (John 14.15). Thus, new congregations, from their start, begin doing all the activities that the first believers did in the early Jerusalem church (Acts 2.37-47). Likewise, in mentoring novice leaders, you must build upon a foundation of simple, loving obedience to Jesus (Matt. 7:24).

To facilitate reproduction of novice leaders and new churches, where folks are becoming believers, good mentors pass on a ‘light baton’. That is, they strip their training of non-essentials such as educational prerequisites, systematic theology, fluency in a second language, and Bible school diplomas. The training baton is light enough that new leaders are able to pass it on to other, newer leaders (Col. 1:7-8).

* Garrison, David, *Church Planting Movements: How God is redeeming a lost world*, (Midlothian VA: WIGtake Resources, 2004), pp. 234-5.

Mentoring Disciplines

To keep churches reproducing, mature leaders require of novice leaders only what the New Testament requires to be appointed as an elder and to train other novice leaders, in turn. This is different from education that requires a high level of literacy and previous schooling.

When mentoring novice leaders, a trainer limits the number of trainees in a training group to a size that allows him to listen to each trainee and to plan with each one what they will do with their flock immediately. This is different from education that prepares for a far future career.

Trainees in a small mentoring group should be as similar as possible in their economic level, social status, culture, and educational background, as well as in the maturity of the congregations or cell groups that they lead. In many places, trainees' similar economic level is the strongest factor in good communication between mentors and trainees. Where mentors are obviously different from their trainees in their amount of income or the way they get paid, the mentoring process often breaks down; trainees of a lower level become passive and slow to act.

Mentoring particulars

While a church is being birthed, mentoring sessions may be held daily. Soon, once a week or every two weeks will suffice, allowing trainees time to study and to apply their learning while tending to their daily shepherding activities.

Mentoring novice leaders in a new church, who are fast, experienced, learners, may last from a few weeks, whereas others may require up to a year or two. Keep on mentoring as long as learners keep obeying and seeking your help, as long as they need it.

Where practical, meet for mentoring where a trainees' new work is going on; always meet at a location accessible by both you and your trainees. Avoid imposing hardship on the poor for your own convenience.

New mentors often do better by referring to a 'menu' of activities and ministries that the New Testament requires of all congregations. You can then choose lessons from your menu that match your trainees' flocks' current needs. (Such menus can be obtained from www.paul-timothy.net.)

Often the best mentor of a novice leader is another novice leader who has a little more experience, for both share similar personal and church needs. If the more experienced one has a menu and some simple materials, he can help others to use those tools, especially if another trainer is mentoring him at the same time.

At every mentoring session, trainers must add something new and positive, such as a new ministry, gathering a new flock, enrolling another leader for mentoring, or winning folks to Christ. Avoid spending the majority of the time dealing with negative, chronic problems. Some problems cannot be solved, so you must move on by simply doing what Jesus or His apostles said to do, in spite of those problems.

Mentoring Activities

When meeting with novice leaders, a good mentor will employ methods that enable those leaders to take initiative. These seven mentoring activities have proven helpful in many countries. They can be done in any order during a mentoring session.

1. **Pray** that the Holy Spirit will give wisdom to your trainees. (James 1:5)
2. **Listen** to your trainees report on what they have been doing and saying and their congregations' current opportunities and needs. (Mark 6:30)
3. **Plan** with your trainees what each one will do with their congregations. Write specific plans with names and places, both trainer and trainee keeping a copy. (Titus 1:5)
4. **Assign** Bible readings and short studies that trainees will do at home. Most of these studies should support their immediate plans. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
5. **Review** together what the trainees learned from their previously assigned studies. (2 Peter 3:1-2)
6. **Model** new skills for trainees either in the session or by going together to do ministry among the people. (Phil. 3:17)
7. **Intercede** for the trainees' congregations, mentioning folks by name. (Col. 4:12)

When the mentoring process breaks down, it is usually due to a mentor's failure to listen or a learner's failure to make specific plans. For example, instead of instructing leaders "to do evangelism", help them to specify persons, methods and places where they will tell the Good News. Plans should be written down, however briefly, and followed up at a later mentoring session.

To find mentoring tools and sites, visit <<http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com>>.

To obtain information on how to use Train & Multiply® (pastoral training combined with church planting) write to Galen Currah <GalenCurrah@Paul-Timothy.net>.

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