



Put Relational Accountability and Skill Modelling back into the Training of Leaders

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Summary

Seminaries and Christian colleges should prepare pastors to mentor new shepherds by modelling pastoral skills on-the-job (2 Tim. 2:2).

► Educators, an alarm, clear and strong, has sounded!

Few graduates of seminaries and Christian colleges arriving to serve churches or work in mission fields know how to model basic pastoral skills relationally for new workers. This is essential to sustain church health and church planting movements. This debilitating deficiency of relational skill modeling in contemporary training of pastors has become so painfully apparent that I have decided to make noise about it. This article is the first of several attempts to correct different root causes of the shocking lack, which is also a major factor in the decline of older denominations.

My first impulse, upon receiving recent communications from effective field practitioners, was to challenge to a duel (well, at least to a debate) any who imply that monologue lecture is always the best way to prepare God's shepherds. However, I dropped that notion because eloquence, which I lack, can trump substance even the examples of Christ and Paul. Recent communications with field practitioners, summarized in <http://goo.gl/cqxcQv>, are compelling.

Where pastoral trainers model skills relationally, churches prove more active and accomplish more ministries than do those led by leaders trained only by classroom monologue. Pastors fulfil their New Testament duty of coaching apprentice pastors, while laymen plant most of the new churches, because both merely repeat what they have seen. The process is so easy that most church planting needs no budget.

Sober investigations show that the neglect of relational pastor skill modeling has stifled God's work in many fields, as much as church health in general. My own observations in the field are being increasingly substantiated by formal studies made of hugely successful church planting movements in isolated, pioneer fields, accurately comparing the results of training in Paul's way with those of academic training alone. One example: David Garrison's *Church Planting Movements*: <http://goo.gl/jQJp7>

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► **Restore relational accountability based on love for Christ and for God's Word.**

A seminary president, when asked recently what his school's aim was, replied, "To uninstall what churches have installed in students' minds". Some older seminaries have ceased to proclaim salvation through Christ's blood. Such apostasy does not begin with denying basic gospel truths; by the time that happens, a school is already far down the slope.

The process goes like this. First, academic arrogance blinds us educators, making us unaware of an imminent divorce from the Bride of Christ. Brilliant scholars seeking highest standards of academic excellence invent curricula that satisfy scholastic elite, but which Christ-obeying, spirit-filled constituent churches neither need nor request. (I know—I have been tempted to put the acclaim of scholars ahead of simply obeying Christ.)

This divorce becomes final when functional accountability and dynamic interaction with godly churches that love Jesus has evaporated. Grants, endowments and gifts from donors with self-gratifying motives accelerate the collapse.

Will you help restore more dynamic, productive relationships between professors, students, godly church leaders and members, with mutual respect and accountability?

► **Let's help each other make needed remedies known.**

We value your advice and critiques to this message, on how to achieve relational skill modeling. Let others know what steps you suggest taking to help each other do such things as...

- Integrate pastoral training with the other vital activities of the Body of Christ.
- Do more training in local church contexts, together with lay believers.
- Help others see the good results where relational skill modeling is the norm, and imitate what is starkly evident in many church planting movements.
- Use whatever type of training fits churches' current needs and field conditions, regardless of our personal preferences and interests.
- Restore accountability to vibrant, Spirit-filled, Christ-obeying churches.
- Respect the New Testament training pattern. New, tiny, highly interactive churches themselves, as seen in the New Testament and early church history, serve as the "classroom" to train shepherds. Let on-the-job skill modeling, as Jesus and Paul did it, remain the norm.
- Other?

► **Would you like to describe what you are doing to restore this essential aspect of theological training?**

If so, then *People Of Yes!* will try to probe for remedies with your help. How can we stir up edifying debate? Reform always entails healthy controversy, so please share your ideas. Argue if you would like, but smile. You may blog your reply at:

<http://peopleofyes.com/3747.html/>