

Mr. Wise leaves the next morning. A month later Learner writes to him, "I began at once to train four other men in my flock seriously, to take more responsibility. I share the burden of leadership more fully with these new shepherding elders. We do what Jethro told Moses to do. I now feel relaxed and have ample time for my family. The new elders are now training newer leaders and delegate much leadership responsibility as the small groups multiply. They all find that they have more time for their families, and to pray and prepare to teach. Thank you for helping us to delegate and name more leaders. The Holy Spirit is using more people to do greater work."

Practical Work

- Appoint elders in every new congregation, following the requirements in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9.
- Train reliable men as shepherding elders, and help them soon to train other newer leaders.
- Teach new leaders with your words and your example to be servant leaders and not proud controllers.
- Strengthen the relationship between you and the leaders you train.
- Meet regularly with the leaders that you train. Pray and listen to their reports. Plan new studies and activities together. Go with them as they visit their people and let them do the talking.
- Let those you train do the preaching when you visit them, to show their people that you respect their leadership and have confidence in them. It is your job to prepare them well to do that preaching. You need to listen to them to know how you can help them improve.

Ministry 6

Train Shepherding Elders and Other Leaders

Helper comes to talk to Learner one day at his house but Learner says, "I am too busy to meet with you today. I'm sorry." Helper is surprised and asks what has happened, but Learner simply says he cannot talk now.

Helper asks Sara what the trouble is. She says, "I do not know. He is discouraged about something. He would not talk about it."

Helper leaves, feeling sad. He writes a message to Mr. Wise, "I am worried about Learner. He seems to have lost his zeal for the work. Something is wrong."

A few days later Mr. Wise arrives, for his first visit in a long time. He finds Helper and they go to talk with Learner. They find Learner at his house but he does not want to talk.



They start to leave but Sara begs them to stay. "Mr. Wise," she says, "Oh, I'm so glad you came! I think I know what is wrong. The congregation has grown so large now that Learner is too busy and has worn himself out. He gives no time to his family. Some of the congregations he serves now help him economically, so that he does not need to work in his shop, but he is still overwhelmed by too many responsibilities. He gets angry with everyone for no reason, even the new believers."

Mr. Wise and Helper ask Learner to pray. He does not want to pray with them. They sit in silence for a long time. Finally Learner speaks softly. "I am so tired! I have too much to do. You must take

over the leadership here again, Mr. Wise. The police have not been pestering us. It will be safe.”

Mr. Wise disagrees. “You have the same problem that Moses had. He did too much himself. He failed to delegate pastoral responsibilities to others. You have done a good job delegating to Helper and the new congregations, but you have failed with your own congregation. I cannot return here to help you shepherd your people. If I try to shepherd every congregation I help start, I will hinder the work of the Holy Spirit! I will wear myself out and not help the people that need it.”

Learner sits listening in silence. Mr. Wise continues, “Jesus commanded us to make disciples and teach them to obey everything He commanded. He passed on to His disciples everything they needed to do the ministry and start new congregations. Sometimes He sent them out by twos, to preach while He was still with them. He said they would do greater works than He did after He was gone. They obeyed Him and passed on to new leaders everything they had received from Him. God blessed their loving obedience.”

“But I am not as strong as they were.”

“God gives you the strength you need. Now you must do what Jesus did. Pass on to others in your own congregation everything they need to do the ministry. I laid hands on you and passed on leadership responsibilities to you. The Spirit of power lives in you as He lives in me. Now you find yourself too busy. Let us read together the Advice of Jehthro to Leaders that Are Too Busy.”

Exercise

Find in Exodus chapter 18 what Moses' father-in-law Jethro told him to do:

- What did Jethro notice that Moses was doing wrong before he mentored Moses?
- What were the people around Moses doing from morning to night?
- What was Jethro's wise counsel to Moses?

- What should a shepherding elder be like? Describe his character.

Mr. Wise continues to encourage the leaders who are meeting in Learner's house. “Paul made sure that every congregation he started had its own elders. They shepherded the people. They worked together as co-pastors. Paul did not consider his job done with a new congregation until it had its own leaders. Outsiders who do not live in a community should not shepherd the congregation. Sometimes Paul went back later to the congregation to appoint them. He left Titus behind in Crete to appoint elders there. Paul and Titus chose men from the congregation itself. They chose men respected by believers, unbelievers, and their own family. A leader's character was just as important as his ability to teach.”

Mr. Foolish complains, “No one here meets the qualifications to be a church leader in my cousin's church.”

Mr. Wise replies, “Some churches add qualifications for leaders that are not in the Scriptures, requirements that neither Christ nor His apostles commanded or practiced. These human traditions prevent leaders from appointing elders in new congregations. This hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. Whenever human traditions hinder our obedience to Christ, we must abandon them.”

Learner says to the group, “Mr. Wise is giving us the same counsel that Jethro gave to Moses. He listened and observed first to find out what the needs were. He did not give advice until he clearly saw the needs and opportunities for ministry. Mr. Wise always does the same. He listens, then helps us to plan new activities together and gives us Bible passages to study that correspond to the needs. We will do the same. Let us pray to commit these plans to God.”



Exercise

Find in John 13:1-17:

- How did the Son of God humbly serve His disciples, as a slave would have done?
- If our Lord and Teacher served His disciples this way, with what attitude should we serve others?
- Jesus did not use only words to train His disciples to be servant leaders. What else did He do?

“I see,” Learner tells Mr. Wise, “Jesus was God’s Son and deserves all honour and worship, but He served His disciples humbly. He took a towel and washed their dusty feet, as a slave would have done in those days. The Great Teacher taught us by His own example. In love, we lead others with the same humility. When we train leaders, we not only teach them the truth of God, but also show them how to obey God by our example of humility.”

The next day Learner calls the leaders of the congregation to meet and explains, “I am going to give you much more responsibility. You will be co-pastors with me.”

Learner did not invite Mr. Foolish but he has come anyway and interrupts, “Learner, no one else is qualified to serve as co-pastors. These men cannot lead ours or the new churches you are helping others to start. You must send them away to Bible school for three or four years before they will be qualified.”

Mr. Wise has not left yet. He disagrees, “That has been tried and seldom works for situations like we have here. Let us look at what the apostle Paul says about the qualifications of leaders. Learner, do you remember The Qualifications for a Leader that we find in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus?”

Exercise

Look through 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus 1:5-9 to find:

- Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete, according to Titus 1:5?
- What did Titus need to do for the new congregations in Crete?

- What kind of men did Jethro tell Moses to appoint as leaders?
- Why could Moses serve the people much better when he shared the leadership?

Sara brings tea and Mr. Wise explains the story to Learner and Helper. “Moses was a great leader. He brought God’s people out of slavery in Egypt. The Bible also says he was a very humble man. He served his people with his whole heart, but he could not serve them well alone. Jethro saw people waiting for him to judge their complaints from morning until evening. He was wearing himself out along with the people. Bad leaders do not share their leadership with others. Now, Learner, please tell me what you remember about this story.”

Learner thinks a moment. “Jethro told Moses to appoint mature leaders who would share the burden of responsibility. These men were to be honest, spiritually mature and capable. Jethro told Moses to judge only the difficult cases that the other leaders brought him. He was to deal with the leaders of a large number, who dealt with leaders of a smaller number until finally it was in small groups of ten where they effectively applied the shepherding to the people.”

“Yes. When Moses shared the leadership this way, he had time to pray and teach. He served the people much better. Learner, like Moses, you have too much work to do. Since you have a strong relationship with several new elders, let them share much more of the burden of responsibility, shepherding them in more small groups.”

“But the new leaders make mistakes,” Learner complains. “I cannot let them make mistakes.”

“Yes, you can, my brother,” Mr. Wise says, “I let you make many mistakes at first. Jesus let His apostles make mistakes. Your new shepherding elders will make mistakes-perhaps as many as I made when I started! Perhaps as many as Jesus’ apostles made at first.”

Learner laughs. "I gave this advice to Helper but forgot to apply it to myself!"

Mr. Wise replies, "Then let us look together at What Paul Taught Timothy About Training Leaders to Train Others."

Exercise

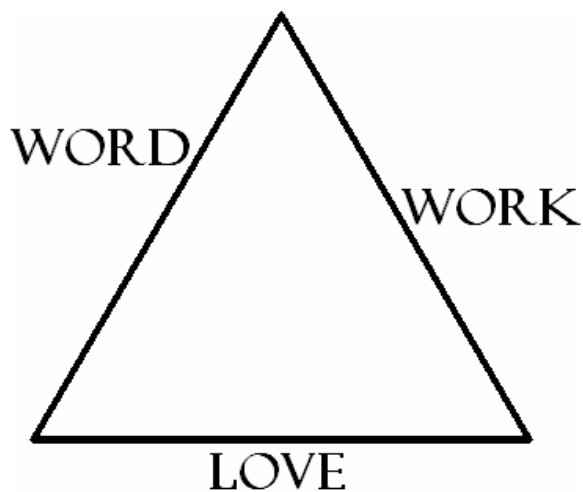
Find in 2 Timothy 2:1-2:

- How deep was the relationship between Paul and Timothy?
- What did Paul tell Timothy to do with what he heard in the presence of many witnesses?
- How many links can you find in this training chain? Start with Paul and count the others.

Helper leaves Mr. Wise with Learner, "Do you see the chain of discipleship in 2 Timothy 2:2? Paul loved Timothy like a son. Paul taught him, Titus and others. He made sure every new congregation had its own elders who were able to teach others. Timothy passed on what he heard from Paul to reliable men. These men taught yet others."

"I see. There are four links in the chain in 2 Timothy 2:2."

"Discipleship is like a triangle with three sides. One side is love, another is the Word, the third side is the work, or practicing the Word. All three sides of the triangle must be in place or it will collapse. Paul practiced all three of these aspects of discipleship. He loved his disciples, and called Timothy his son. He taught them the Word of God faithfully,



passing on everything he had received. He helped them apply the Word of God immediately to their lives and the life of the flock. Now, what do you plan to do, Learner?"

"My relationship with the new elders has grown weak. I must strengthen my relationship with them by listening to them more. Before I teach them, I will ask them what their groups need. I will help them apply their teaching to their own flocks. I will show them how to pass on their teaching to others who can teach others also, as Paul said. I will be more careful always to pray, to listen and to plan together when I meet with the elders, like you did for me." Learner writes a list of things to do when he meets with the new elders to mentor them:

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us all during mentoring sessions.

Listen to the apprentices as they report on their ministry activities.

Listen to them as they summarize what they are learning from the Bible.

Plan new activities according to the needs and opportunities that they see in their small groups.

Assign new Bible studies according to the needs and opportunities.

Commit our plans to the Lord in prayer.

Mr. Wise says, "When a leader fails to share his leadership responsibilities with others, he lacks humility. He needs to become a servant leader. Jesus showed us what servant leaders are like. He told us to serve people humbly without trying to be important and powerful. Read with me about The Servant Leader Who Washed His Students' Feet.

A shepherding elder must be "able to teach." Why does God require this?