MentorNet #06
Classroom and Mentored Teaching Compared

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Three uncontested essentials of on-going people movements that result in new churches include (a) prevailing prayer, (b) zealous evangelism and (c) continual training of pastoral leaders.

For new leaders of new churches, the most effective training is regular, relational interaction between them and a mentor or coach who listens to them before giving assignments. In maturing Christian movements, there should also be some kind of systematic teaching for more experienced leaders.

Thus both kinds of instruction are required, often simultaneously: (a) classroom instruction that presents subjects exhaustively and (b) mentored coaching that meets current learning, skill and performance needs to serve new churches, cells and small groups.

We have compiled an analytical outline that compares the classroom and mentoring approaches on 43 points in nine areas important to training. It may be viewed in its entirety at <http://currah.info/docs> For a brief list of samples, consider the following factors:

1. Seating during Sessions of Instruction

Mentoring. Our trainees form a circle or some other arrangement that allows maximum interaction. When modeling skills we walk (or ride) together or sit around a table as at the Last Supper.

Classroom. Our students usually face the same way, seeing mainly the backs of other students' heads.

2. Acceptance

Mentoring. Mentoring as a vital part of Western Evangelical theological education has limited acceptance. Relatively few educators mentor in a disciplined way or teach the value of it. We observe in movements where churches reproduce, however, that someone is mentoring new leaders in some way.

Classroom. Especially for more mature leaders, classroom instruction is almost universally accepted as the norm.

3. Relationships

Mentoring. As mentors we show love, care and interest. Paul shed tears for new leaders in training (Acts 20:31).

Classroom. For leaders who are mature enough to make their own application of the material, our main concern is normally less personal and focuses on how well students grasp the subject.

4. Recognition

Mentoring. We normally are not concerned with professional credentials. Mentoring, even when producing excellent results, usually goes unrecognized by education institutions. Field practitioners who value results higher than formal credentials recognize skill acquisition.

Classroom. Institutional recognition opens doors for paid positions and offers credentials that are widely accepted.

5. Commitment to Ministry

Mentoring. Student-leaders commit to a shepherding ministry from the outset of their training, at least to shepherding their own families as the core of a new cell group or church. Their education integrates more and more practice of pastoral skills as they move forward. We push them into the swimming pool from the very beginning-but into the shallow end, requiring that they do only what their level of training allows. They do no pulpit oratory, for example, while still taking child's steps as new leaders.

Classroom. Our students often commit more consciously to completing units of study or degree programs. In some programs they commit to internships that are quite separate from classroom learning.

6. Methods

Mentoring. Training combines modeling **skills** and discussion sessions. In discussion sessions we normally do six things.

1) **Pray** for guidance.
2) **Listen** to each student's report on work done and the condition of the people they are mentoring, pastoring, discipling or serving in some other way.
3) **Plan**. Normally a student's plans flow from the report; we ask students what they plan to do with their people and—often more important—what their people will do. Plans are usually specific things to be done in the next week or two. We often use a *menu* that lists ministry options to facilitate planning. Help each
4) **Review** studies done.
5) **Assign** new studies. Normally these correspond to the plans.
6) **Pray for each other,** for power to carry out the specific plans.

Classroom. Research and subject mastery, lesson objectives, organization of material and choice of learning exercises precede delivery. We give more importance to our responsibility to communicate knowledge than to the student's ability to pass it on immediately to others.

7. Application

Mentoring. We often use a *menu* **to make it easy to apply studies to immediate ministry needs and opportunities.** Students select content from different sources as required by current situations. Jesus said a good teacher in the Kingdom of God is like a householder who brings forth treasures from his storehouse, things both new and old

(Matt. 13:52). Extensive preparation of material often *follows* a session, in response to students' reports of needs or ministry opportunities.

Classroom. We prepare material ahead of class time and normally limit it to one subject. We follow its outline closely.

8. Use of Scripture

Mentoring. We use the Bible, especially the New Testament, not only as content for teaching but also as the norm for how our people practice evangelism, confirm repentance, organize churches, conduct worship, relate to other congregations, train leaders and deploy missionaries.

Classroom. George Patterson confesses, "When teaching in the original Honduran Bible Institute I used the Bible almost exclusively as content *for my teaching. The result was dismal; our pastors seldom used Scripture as the norm for the way their churches practiced many of the activities required by the New Testament."*

9. Responsibility for Training Leaders

Mentoring. We aim for pastors (shepherding elders) to take the main responsibility and initiative to train **newer** pastors. In pioneer mission fields this is often essential for normal church multiplication. A church's apostles (the 'sent ones' of Ephesians 4:11-12) start the process in a neglected area, as in 2 Timothy 2:2 and Titus 1:5. A mission agency or educational program may provide guidelines, tools and some faculty, but should not take the primary responsibility from the pastors.

Classroom. Faculty of an educational institution tend to assume the main responsibility for preparing mature Christian leaders. George Patterson recalls, "In the original Honduran Bible Institute our faculty lacked pastoral gifting; as a result we produced preachers but not pastors. Students taught well but did not shepherd their flocks by leading it into the gift-based **found in** *the New Testament."*

Where both classroom and mentored approaches are used simultaneously, we must take great care to avoid relational mentoring being eclipsed by purely academic programs that are more prestigious or more likely to lead to power or economic advantage (jobs). Where the academic approach alone is not resulting in new churches that reproduce, mentoring may be required. Where mentoring alone does not enable leaders to minister to sophisticated audiences, **we** must supplement it with an academic program. Our appeal to mission and church leaders is to ensure the availability of both kinds of training for their intended purposes.

To find mentoring tools and sites, visit <http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com>.
We invite those who use Train & Multiply™ to write to George Patterson at <GPatterson@cvimail.net>.
For information on T&M™, visit <http://www.TrainAndMultiply.com>.
For information on Paul & Timothy Training, visit <http://www.Paul-Timothy.net>.
For information on "Come, Let Us Disciple the Nations" (CD-ROM) <http://www.AcquireWisdom.com>.
Order the *Church Multiplication Guide* from your Christian bookshop at <http://www.WCLbooks.com>.