

MentorNet #19
THE NEED FOR ASSERTIVE MENTORING FOR REPRODUCTION

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“I will build my church.”—Jesus (Matt. 16:18)

Jesus, the great Lover of our souls and Forgiver of our sins, never wavered in his purpose for His followers. He painted clear visions, gave precise instructions, issued absolute orders and demonstrated single-hearted devotion to his mission. He wants us to evangelize the nations and invite the peoples to repentance and life. The urgency of bringing people to Christ and of reproducing churches is a part of what moves Christian mentors to give time freely to train pastors for church reproduction.

Westerners, in general, find it hard to agree and focus on outcomes, because each individual seeks his own interests and personal affluence. Even our younger adults, despite their search for spirituality and community, have little sense of purpose aside from enjoying friends and sensory stimulation. As a result, Western mentors fail to press for verifiable outcomes and their trainees doubt their churches' willingness to plan and take action.

Those of us who mentor non-Westerners may encounter less resistance to make and follow plans, yet we often err by letting Western concerns sidetrack us. Instead of concentrating on doing what Jesus commanded, we focus on better materials, ensuring workers' financial security, defining believer maturity, cultural sensitivity to perceived enemies, and advancing our careers and organizational reputations.

In order to keep churches reproducing, we mentors must provide highly directive mentoring that keeps workers encouraged and motivated. Western mentors, who have found it hard to focus on outcomes, can learn to envision by faith, motivate with love, and plan with spiritual wisdom. We must also seek to mentor those who are called and gifted for church planting and allow those with other gifting to do what they do well — without us.

- a) **Appoint elders, do not elect them.** The democratic process is so highly valued in the West and so widely touted in some parts of the East, that popular elections of congregational elders often replace the Scriptural norm. In the West, it is not unusual that pastoral candidates must give campaign speeches and there must be more candidates than offices, so that the membership can elect one candidate and reject another.
- b) **Direct elders, do not only inform them.** The scriptural task of the apostle who starts new congregations (Titus 1:5) is to appoint elders who meet certain qualifications. Where few men or women meet those qualifications, the apostle must teach, counsel, train and reprimand the believers until some qualify as elders. The teaching ministry in the West has often been more an exercise in precisely defining words than in effectively making disciples of raw human material. We must hold to the biblical standards for new leaders and bring willing trainees up to those standards. Only lay hands on (commission) those that qualify, while continuing to coach those who provide pastoral care while yet unqualified.
- c) **Enthuse elders; do not discourage them by demanding perfection.** The commands and promises of Jesus and his apostles remain the most powerful motivators to obedient faith. If

we present both the challenges and rewards of biblical leadership, trainees who know and love Christ will respond enthusiastically. Paul asserted in Ephesians 4:11 that God gives pastors and teachers to congregations. He always does, sooner than later. Part of the apostolic task is to identify them, to enthuse them, to appoint them and to mentor them, until they are effectively mentoring others, in turn

- d) **Empower elders, do not simply teach them.** We can empower new leaders by delegating our authority to them to perform pastoral ministries for their congregations. If we merely teach them, then we risk enabling immature and carnal men to grab power and dominate congregations, if we adopt merely cultural standards for leaders, such as advanced education, business acumen, affluence or political influence. Rather, a good mentor helps leaders to serve Christ and their congregations by serving as a model to them. Such modeling often initiates voluntary mentoring chains; one man empowers another who does the same for others, in turn.

Jesus said to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to raise up new workers. When we do so, he does so. Most new workers come from the local population, not from some distant land. Jesus walked with his disciples, shared with them his personal authority, sent them to do ministry, listened to them give their reports, and gave new teaching that met their current needs. Should we do any less?

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