

Shift from Big Group Training to Mentoring Chains

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The need. Many shepherds and missionaries from the East and the South, as much as from the West, imagine that the best-quality workers have been trained in expensive institutions. However, while most Bible Schools and seminaries graduate effective workers, there will never be enough of them to meet the needs of rapidly-reproducing churches and cells.

In reality, small churches and cell groups normally reproduce faster and healthier—especially in pioneer fields—when shepherds themselves train novice shepherds in the same way that Jesus and His apostles mentored novice workers. For example, Paul trained Timothy and many others by mentoring them on the job, equipping them to mentor others, in turn, in mentoring ‘chains’ (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5).

Scripture requires that only mature believers be named as shepherds. Many such ‘elders’ types are heads of families and have regular employment and other responsibilities that keep them from attending workshops and training institutions. Even so, they can receive training from other shepherds who mentor them, and they, in turn, can mentor other novice shepherds.

Where God’s flocks are reproducing most effectively, new ‘daughter’ flocks are started by self-supported workers who are members of nearby ‘mother’ churches. Such reproduction normally happens when shepherds train novice workers in mentoring chains. That is, each church becomes a ‘link in the chain’ when it commissions its workers to mentor novice leaders in both the mother and daughter churches.

Therefore, many shepherds and apostles must shift from relying only on classroom training and adopt a mentoring approach. Coordinators of pastoral training making such a shift can follow these well-tested guidelines:

I. Start with only a few.

- 1) Begin with only a few trainees whom you mentor yourself (perhaps between two and six).
- 2) Build a trusting relationship with those whom you mentor, and agree with them on your objectives. Normally, two such objectives should be to gather new flocks throughout your region in every neglected community, and to mentor their new leaders.
- 3) Continue holding your usual seminars and classroom training while you implement mentoring chains, because every new leader still needs training.
- 4) Expect some trainees who only want institutional training to drop out from being mentored. Other trainees will respond to mentoring and be willing to mentor others.
- 5) Choose as your mentored trainees men and women who clearly understand how mentoring is done and whom you know to be obedient to Christ.

II. You and other mentors should bring your mentored trainees together for a workshop or series of meetings and introduce them to mentoring.

The purpose of such meetings is to help trainees to:

- Start practicing the Apostle Paul’s instructions to train new shepherds in mentoring ‘chains’. Have each workshop participant make concrete plans to mentor qualified trainees who are ‘elder’ types who, in turn, will begin without delay to mentor other, newer shepherds. Help every participant to choose carefully no more than six others whom they are to mentor.
- Provide training materials that offer a *menu* from which to select study topics that fit the urgent, changing needs of new, small flocks that are growing spiritually and reproducing. Supply sets of such training materials to all workshop participants who are to mentor other workers.

Such mentoring materials are provided by *Paul-Timothy* and *Train and Multiply*[®].

- a. *Paul-Timothy (P-T)* materials, written by George Patterson, Galen Currah, Anne Thiessen and other experienced workers, are free. Download them from www.Paul-Timothy.net.
- b. *TrainAndMultiply® (T&M)*, written by George Patterson, requires a license to reproduce the pastoral training materials. Obtain them from www.TrainAndMultiply.com.
- c. *Shepherd's Storybook (SS)* was written by Robert and Anne Thiessen for less-educated trainees and for those who learn best through stories that teach biblical truths. Downloaded it free from www.Paul-Timothy.net (Click on "Download").

During workshops, let trainees practice mentoring each other using the P-T or T&M menu, or the SS table of contents.

For an effective, fun workshop, use demonstrations, skits and role-plays to help your trainers and church planters to learn to mentor. Mentoring can enable each church to start daughter churches, and empowers each shepherd to mentor novice shepherds. Sample learning aids are provided in the Paul-Timothy workshop manual. Download it freely from www.Paul-Timothy.net (click on "Download", then on "Workshop Manuals").

If you need help to plan a workshop:

- Confer with your mentored training consultant or regional training coordinator, or write to mentors@paul-timothy.net.
- Use the P-T workshop manual mentioned above to introduce either *T&M* or *P-T* materials. Then adapt it to your local needs and culture.

III. Do the following activities in every mentoring session, during the workshop and from then on when you meet to mentor novice shepherds.

- 1) After praying for guidance, **listen** to each trainee report what his flock has been doing. Compare what has been done with the plans made in the previous mentoring session.
- 2) **Plan** together what each trainee's flock will do in the field until you meet again. Write these plans on paper.
- 3) Use a menu of optional studies to **select reading** that fits the plans and current needs.
 IMPORTANT: P-T menus list studies under the ministries required by the New Testament. Keep on mentoring a new shepherd until his flock is doing all of these required ministries. Note that this includes starting daughter churches and mentoring their new leaders.
- 4) Ask each trainee to **tell briefly what he learned from his reading** that you assigned in a prior session, or look over the answers that he wrote to questions written in the reading material. Do not assign new studies until he has done past assignments.
- 5) **Pray** for each other, and for help to carry out the plans.

IV. Deal prayerfully, patiently and prudently with people who oppose mentoring.

Educators who know only traditional, institutional training often fear and resist biblical mentoring. If some see it as a threat to their position or program, then assure them that mentoring is not meant to replace their classrooms but to supplement classroom instruction. Explain that mentoring can provide training for the many potential leaders who cannot attend the larger classroom meetings. Be sure that everyone who participates in mentoring knows its biblical basis.

If a new shepherd lacks experience in biblical mentoring, then he may fear to do it at first. He may need several months to understand it, to accept its validity and to learn the needed skills.

V. Keep developing your mentoring skills.

- Write down what you learn while mentoring. Note insights, surprises, problems, new opportunities, etc. Discuss these observations with your consultant or coordinator.
- Evaluate the mentoring process and outcomes monthly, and discuss them with your mentor or consultant. Note strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Adjust your methods to avoid chronic problems.

- Retain practices that prove helpful and produce desired outcomes. Abandon practices that confuse others and produce poor results.
- Introduce through your trainees fresh activities in response to opportunities.
- Keep mentoring a trainee until he is mentoring other shepherds also, and his flock is doing the ministries that the New Testament requires of it.
- Recommend and demonstrate methods that have proven helpful during previous months.

VI. When those whom you have mentored can mentor others effectively, introduce mentoring chains throughout your area.

When trainees start mentoring newer leaders, their flocks can multiply surprisingly fast, much faster than you might have foreseen. Be ready to keep up with this work of the Holy Spirit who powerfully multiplies the seed of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some workers are able to begin mentoring at once; other workers will need to see it modeled first. Help your mentored trainees to begin as soon as possible to oversee and mentor other shepherds and church planters. If you do not know how to help a trainee or his flock with a particular need, then confer with your mentor or mentoring consultant.

As mentoring develops, you might mentor only a few leaders yourself, who mentor others, who in turn mentor still others and so forth, to include hundreds of trainees. Make sure that you get progress reports at least once a month from every church in the mentoring chain. Also make sure that trainees help each flock to initiate all the ministries that God requires of it. The *T&M*, *P-T* and *SS* menus all list these vital activities.

VII. Continue to provide consulting service and materials for all mentors.

Be available to confer with trainers who mentor others. They will have many questions. Plan and organize small introductory workshops to be held in other regions of the country where workers have yet to shift to mentored training.

Prepare training materials or adopt those that are listed in training menus like *P-T*, *SS* and *T&M*. Distribute materials to all shepherds who are being trained through the mentoring chains. Avoid giving training materials away freely; let workers pay at least the cost of printing or photocopy.

To find mentoring tools and web 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>.

To obtain information on how to obtain T&M[®], visit <<http://www.TrainAndMultiply.com>>.

Download free, reproducible training materials for new leaders & missionaries: <www.Paul-Timothy.net>.

Download "Come, Let Us Disciple the Nations" (CD-ROM): <<http://www.paul-timothy.net/dn/>>.

To order *Church Multiplication Guide* in English visit <<http://www.WCLbooks.com>> or a book shop.

To download the CMG free in Portuguese or French, visit <<http://paul-timothy.net/cm/>>.

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To obtain counsel on severe church planting obstacles and training challenges, write to George Patterson at <GPatterson@cvi2.org>.