

MentorNet 44

Seven Guidelines to Train Church Planters and Shepherds on the Job

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The following guidelines for those who train church planters and pastoral trainers come from our ‘storehouse’ of years of training that has seen church planting movements develop through God’s gracious enablement. MentorNet #7 pointed out a distinct feature of New Testament leader training in the way in which Jesus and his apostles gave intensive, focused attention to their apprentices and their flocks’ needs. Paul ordered his apprentice Timothy:

As for you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Join me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
(2 Timothy 2:1-3, ISV).

1. Adopt a Biblical Model of Leader Training

This four-level training ‘chain’ recalls Jethro’s advice to Moses (Exo18), when thousands of new shepherding elders needed orientation. Such chains enable a leader to prepare many shepherds rapidly, starting with only one or two apprentice shepherds. Such chains prove both reproductive and reproducible. We recommend Patrick O’Connor, *Reproducible Pastoral Training* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2006), an expanded checklist of church planting and pastoral training guidelines. <www.WCLbooks.com>.

For best results, train new leaders — and help others to do so — in the way that Jesus and the apostle Paul did, in order to multiply rapidly both new leaders and churches or cell groups, as they did in apostolic times. Perhaps the main obstacle to such training, whether done by workshops, personal mentoring or a series of training sessions, is the compelling, non-biblical Western educational tradition. Christian workers who have had years of experience in classroom courses with a linear, non-interactive curriculum, find it hard — at first — to flex enough to adopt a more biblical ‘menu-based’ approach to need-driven training of new leaders.

2. Lead Workshops for Church Planters and Pastoral Trainers

Pray that the Holy Spirit will give the workshop participants a concrete vision of multiplying leaders and churches, and teach with this aim in mind.

- Let workshop participants form small work groups with actual or potential co-workers, and spend time drawing maps or in some other way recording plans for their churches to begin at once to plant daughter churches. Let them write down whom they will send to start new churches or cells, where these flocks may be located, and indicate possible granddaughter and great granddaughter flocks.

- Let each group report its plans to the assembly. Let the participants pray for each group, that God will help it to carry out the plans. This time of reporting and praying is often the most motivating highlight of such workshops.
- Teach as much as possible with brief role-plays and demonstrations. Prepare trainees during breaks to act out Bible stories or to do simple skits that illustrate useful skills.

3. Take Advantage of Menu-based Mentoring

A menu-based curriculum enables trainers to help new leaders deal with urgent needs as they arise in ‘baby’ churches and cells. A training menu lists activities that the New Testament requires of flocks, integrated with the doctrines that correspond to each activity. Remember, no vital doctrine of Scripture was revealed without its corresponding duty.

- Teaching in response to the current needs and opportunities to serve, as expressed by trainees, honors the method of Christ and His apostles. Following a traditional, linear curriculum alone hinders such responsive teaching.
- Training by mentoring prepares self-supported workers whose jobs and other responsibilities make it impossible for them to attend institutions and seminars with classes held during work hours. Mentoring can mobilize far more self-supported church planters and shepherds (‘tent makers’), without relying so heavily on young, single, poorly paid workers, which inevitably breeds crippling dependency.
- A good training menu lists study materials that correspond to all vital ministries and doctrines, integrating theory and practice, making it easy for trainees’ flocks quickly to become active doers of God’s Word and not hearers only.
- A good menu allows a trainer to add studies and books to the curriculum, especially as unforeseen needs arise.
- MentorNet recommends studies that are geared to sustain church multiplication, by rapidly training many new shepherds with a focus on relational evangelism and on obeying the commands of Christ, as His Great Commission requires. Loving obedience to Jesus gives new flocks the right foundation.

4. Recognize the Challenges of Menu-based Training

Unfortunately, few educators can shake themselves loose from the monologue lectures in order to train new pastors in the way Scripture shows that it should be done. They may feel tempted to take menu-based training materials and use them like ordinary textbooks in an institutional program, starting with the first study in the menu and going through the list without regard to the new churches’ needs.

- Most menu-based studies come in the form of small, pocket-size booklets. Trainers select a study that applies to an urgent need. However, traditional educators often bind such study booklets into one big volume which proves too expensive for the average student in a pioneer field, and too big to pack around in one’s pocket to read whenever time allows.
- Seminars sponsored by a traditional educator to train church planters seldom yield permanent results. When such a seminar is over, the participants forget much of it, or it is contradicted by existing, traditional programs.

- Field coordinators often fail to keep printing new supplies of study booklets and providing regional deposits of materials. Thus, the studies listed in the menu get used up and trainers resort to any traditional textbooks that are available. This leads back to institutional education, and the expensive, non-reproductive but popular traditions.
- Church associations often elect as coordinators existing leaders who are popular but have too many administrative duties and cannot focus effectively on training and church planting. Such elected leaders often serve for a specific term of years, and then fail to find a replacement who sees the job as anything more than an elected ‘position’ with a title, and so church multiplication ceases. Coordinators must be gifted leaders who are passionate about church multiplication and continue to coordinate as long as the Lord gives them strength and grace to do so.

5. Find or Build a Good Menu of Studies

A mentor’s menu must integrate theology with action. It is a crime to fail to integrate biblical doctrines with their corresponding practical work. Failure to connect doctrine and duty fragmentizes biblical doctrine, leading to a distorted view of Christ and His church, and seriously limiting the services rendered by a church body.

- A good menu is easy to use, avoids non-essential details, and enables inexperienced leaders to begin at once to mentor newer leaders. New leaders are often effective mentors of other new leaders, because their young flocks share similar needs, and they are concerned about the same issues. However, there must be an experienced mentor at the head of all mentoring chains, who knows how to deal with issues beyond the grasp of new workers.
- The Bible requires these 14 areas of church life that make up, in one form or another, the menu categories treated in *Train & Multiply*[®], *Paul-Timothy Studies*, and *Shepherd’s Storybook*:
 1. Evangelism and Baptism.
 2. New Churches and Home Groups.
 3. Foreign Missions.
 4. Fellowship, Forgiveness and Reconciliation.
 5. Marriage and Family.
 6. Serving the Needy.
 7. Prayer and Spiritual Warfare.
 8. Spiritual Care and Transformation.
 9. Overseeing and Planning.
 10. Shepherding the Flock, Watching for ‘Wolves’.
 11. Teaching and Applying God’s Word.
 12. Stewardship.
 13. Group Worship, Communion.
 14. Training Leaders for Mother and Daughter Churches.

6. Practice How to Use a Menu of Studies

Like a waiter in a restaurant, a trainer should listen to those whom he coaches as they report what their churches are ‘hungry’ for. Then he goes to the ‘kitchen’ (Bible passages and study materials listed in the menu) and brings out studies and activities that fit each trainee’s flock’s immediate needs and ministry opportunities.

- Using a list of options lets students and trainers select studies and activities that fit the immediate needs of their churches and cells. New churches and new leaders, especially in new fields, have urgent needs and ministry opportunities that require attention *now*. A linear curriculum outline overlooks urgent needs. Jesus and His apostles taught mainly in response to needs by listening first, then responding. Jesus said in Matthew 13:52:

Every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

- A good training menu helps a new shepherd to integrate a variety of resources to use at once with his flock. Well-experienced pastors and missionaries may not need such a menu, because they have the options in their mind, but less experienced trainers need a menu to train others in a relevant way.

7. When to Teach with a Monologue

We need both types of training —mentoring and classroom lectures — to provide a balanced education. New leaders of new flocks, like newborn babies, have urgent needs that require the immediate attention of a mentor. However, as flocks and their leaders mature, their needs become less urgent and their mentors should ‘wean’ them away from being mentored, like Jesus and Paul did for their trainees. Mentoring is too time-consuming to continue indefinitely, and the time comes sooner than most trainers expect when it is no longer needed on a regular basis. When workers mature, they can continue learning from time-saving lectures. Jesus and Paul did both: when training new leaders, they mentored them in small groups; when instructing crowds, they lectured.

Appendix—Menu-based Programs

Paul-Timothy applies the Bible to immediate needs of trainees’ churches, including studies for children. Download freely from <www.Paul-Timothy.net>.

Train and Multiply[®] provides pocket-sized pastoral training studies with cartoons, for rapid church multiplication in new fields. Many languages. Visit <www.TrainAndMultiply.com>.

Shepherd’s Storybook uses Bible stories to teach vital doctrines and duties to new leaders whose reading ability is limited. Download freely from <www.Paul-Timothy.net>.

Mentor for Ministry. Receive credit from Western Seminary or a certificate from Community Vision International for being mentored. Information: <GalenCurrah@WesternSeminary.edu>.

Find mentoring tools and web sites at <<http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com>>.

Download “Come, Let Us Disciple the Nations” (software) free from <<http://www.paul-timothy.net/dn/>>.

Order *Church Multiplication Guide* in English from <<http://www.WCLbooks.com>> or at a book shop. Download CMG free in Portuguese or in French from <<http://paul-timothy.net/cmgl/>>.

Order *Reproducible Pastoral Training* in English from <<http://www.WCLbooks.com>> or at a book shop.

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To learn how to use *Train & Multiply*[®] write to Galen Currah at <GalenCurrah@TrainAndMultiply.com>.

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