

WRITING TRAINING BOOKLETS FOR YOUR TRAINEES

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As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men. 1 Timothy 1:3

Sooner than later in a mentoring relationship with novice leaders of new churches, you will find that certain opportunities and challenges come up more frequently. If you have a menu-driven program like “Train & Multiply”[®], then you may already have training booklets on those subjects. But not always. And your folk’s culture or religious background may require something new or better. So, you should not hesitate to write new training materials.

The Apostle Paul’s “epistles” to Timothy and Titus were training materials. Fortunately, they were so helpful (and inspired) that they have been preserved and continue to be read and followed around the globe to this day. A careful look at how Paul wrote *1 Timothy* can provide some guidelines for writing your own materials, making adjustments to the form to fit your culture. Here are some for your consideration.

1. Keep materials short, so that less experienced readers can work through them before your next meeting.

It is no accident that the “pastoral epistles” are short. Paul may have written scores or hundreds of such letters, which alone would require they be short. More importantly, less-educated, novice, church leaders often cannot read fast, and they often cannot absorb a lot of theory. Better to err on the side of brevity than of that of boredom.

2. Write to a specific person and keep them in mind while writing.

Timothy and Titus may have had a lot of issues in common but maybe not at the same time. Their questions were hot issues for them, and Paul dealt with each one’s concerns. When you write new materials, write them first for one person and personalize them. Later, when you want to use the same materials with others, you can remove personal references and make each booklet more generally applicable without losing the practical, urgent advice you gave earlier.

Whenever we educated, theologically-informed types try to write about a subject with no local application, the result proves theoretical, dry, pedantic and irrelevant, even if biblically true. But materials that come off the anvil of real churches can more easily provide helpful, timely truth and advice.

3. Deal with real, current needs of real churches.

Paul had correspondence with Timothy and Titus who informed him of their churches’ current opportunities and challenges. When they had questions they could not answer, they would meet with Paul at an arranged location or send to him brief messages carried by travelers going between major centers of the Roman Empire. Once informed of their needs, Paul would answer with his inspired advice.

When you and I try to write handbooks and practical theologies for churches about which we know nothing, the result is seldom helpful to anyone. Without real questions, our writings only deal with our own speculations or some seminary professor's ideal ecclesiology. Worse is our trying to write materials for another culture group based on experiences from the sterile, stagnant churches of our home regions.

4. Tie every main point to a truth or doctrine about God or Christ.

There is as much pure theology in *1 Timothy* as in most other books of the New Testament. To our knowledge, neither the Lord nor any of the prophets and apostles ever attempted to write a book of systematic theology. Paul apparently thought theologically about practical issues. He then salted his pastoral advice with sound doctrine.

Some doctrines taught in *1 Timothy* include:

- the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God;
- God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth;
- there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time;
- God has created foods to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth;
- the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time.

5. Keep instructions clear with enough action points to make a plan.

Create some kind of record for listing out practical instructions and action steps to be taken. In *1 Timothy*, most of Paul's verbs are active, purposeful and related to the actual situation in the churches of Ephesus.

Likewise, a test to apply to our training materials is to ask ourselves whether the readers of our booklets will know what to do. If we have only supplied concepts, theories or ideals, then we have not trained anyone to shepherd a flock, we have merely educated.

6. Underscore the main points of Christian life: faith, hope, love, and purity; prayer, teaching and obedience to the Word of God.

The churches belong to God, for he purchased them with the blood of his own Son. You and I often come into a church-planting movement with our own agenda. Perhaps we have a pet theology that we learnt in seminary and want all the churches to teach it. Maybe we have had a spiritual experience and want all the churches to seek an experience like ours. Or a professor at the university surmised that churches should act in concert to support just social causes. Paul, too, had had many exciting, spiritual experiences, but he did not mention any of those in *1 Timothy*.

Church members must learn to devote themselves to helping each other act as disciples of Jesus who lovingly obey his commands. The main goal of all that we train leaders to do, is to help believers to learn to love one another while maintaining a pure heart, a good conscience and a sound faith (1:5). All our advice must have that as its main purpose.

7. Provide something for every kind of person in the church: pastor, elder, deacon, men, women, children, rich, poor, and cantankerous.

While not every training booklet will have advice for dealing with every kind of church member, yet, over time, your training and materials will have to deal with many kinds of persons and needs. How can you gain that kind of wisdom? That may take a few years of experience in your own church work and in dealing with novice leaders. Of course, it helps to have your own mentor who is further along in years of experience than you are yourself.

A few other points of advice can be added that do not come from 1 Timothy, but from years of experience in writing and editing training materials.

8. Keep copies of your pastoral letters and lessons, and those of others, so that you can edit them later into training materials.

Timothy and Titus must have kept their letters from Paul and must have shared them with others, for they have been preserved to this day. Those epistles, since they are Holy Scripture, were never edited into another form, but your and my stuff will never be Scripture. So we can keep improving and revising our booklets — if we do not lose them.

9. Get help from training specialists to make your booklets better for study and learning by individual users.

In the West, training materials usually have a catchy introduction, follow a simple story line, are broken up into small learning pieces, and provide self-testing questions and practical applications. Your culture probably has some similar format for training aids. If your users are not literate, then perhaps you can find helpers who can teach reading skills.

10. Make your best stuff available to others.

If you are humble enough to ask other mentors and trainers to share their goods with you, then they, too, will desire to use yours. A central office or an Internet download site can be set up where you file your training materials. If you are a licensed T&M[®] user, then Project WorldReach may want to make some of your materials a part of the program for your region, perhaps internationally. Contact <PWR@trainandmultiply.com>.

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@cvmail.net>.

For information on T&M[™], visit <<http://www.TrainAndMultiply.com>>.

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