

National Conference on Hispanic Outreach

“The Importance of Leadership Training and Responsibility of Men in the Local Church”

March 10, 2018

Why Leadership? Why Now?¹

We live in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and increasingly ambiguous time. We must provide a clear path ahead for the people we serve. As Christian leaders, we must stay rooted in the ancient wisdom of Scriptures in a way that is relevant in our present-day culture. Our great struggle in our study each week is to bring the timeless, transcendent wisdom of the Bible into the contemporary context in which we live.

This is more difficult today in my opinion. I believe the reason is that the church is no longer in a place of power and position within in our culture. Authority is undermined at every turn. I am faced with critical spirits and intellectual pride at every turn. When we come to the Scriptures each week, we must look into the future by looking back at the past. The good news is that God is growing churches here in California in a way that more closely resembles the Book of Acts. If we are to develop leaders for the New Testament local church today, this book ought to be studied. I would challenge all of us to work out an approach to leadership from Acts. A. B. Bruce focused upon the Gospels, but we can profit not just from the training of the twelve, but from what the Lord did through them in Acts.

Self-Leadership

If we are to develop good leaders in our churches, we had better be good at self-leadership. Self-leadership means we are good exegetes in three areas:

- All leaders must understand **principles in Scripture** which support life and vitality in people they lead.
- All leaders must understand the **people** they serve.
- All leaders must understand the **culture** in which they serve.

Enlisting Leaders

Acts 6 provides a framework for servant leadership within the local church context. Jesus makes it clear that those who are the best leaders are the most reliable servant-stewards. The pastor cannot be the only servant-steward within the church. Deacons are called alongside of the pastor to strengthen his hands so that he can devote his time to prayer and preparation of the Word.

These people do more than free up the pastor’s time. They complement him. They bring strength where he is weak. The pastor must come to the realization that he is not capable of doing everything. He is not good at doing everything. He must stop trying.

¹ This workshop is the fruit of my study in *the Foundations of Christian Leadership Mobile Education Class* through Logos Bible Software. I’ve provided a selected group of readings with this handout for further study and development.

Instead, this realization pushes the pastor to develop leadership teams within the local church. Self-awareness gives way to an important breakthrough. The best way for me to develop leadership in our church is to work primarily with three or four men at a time. These are the deacons of our church and my administrative full-time assistant. We meet every week. My goal is to make the atmosphere comfortable enough for these men to share their ideas with our small group. As the leader of the church, I guide and shepherd these men into leadership. I do the same with our teachers in our Christian school.

I don't want men and women around me who agree with me. I want them to bring their unique gifts to the table. Our church needs *their* skills, abilities, and energies along with *mine*. Even though we are different, the goals and plans stated by our church documents need to be carried out. This means that we all need to bring together our gifts and unite under a common vision. Then, I must create an atmosphere of mutual accountability. They hold me accountable for this vision; I hold them accountable.

Eternal Equity

Good leadership in the local church doesn't just happen. Good leaders are trained and made through intentional effort. I think my focus through the years has been to help men learn to pray, be good husbands and fathers, and to stay away from sexual immorality. I think all of this is important, but they must also need to take ownership of our church constitution and a Baptist, dispensational, separatist theology as well. I say this not to disparage other traditions within Fundamentalism, but to help us find this common vision or purpose as a church.

We serve the Lord Jesus. We don't limit our time to a 40-hour work week. We don't quibble over our paycheck. We are heavily invested in the local church because we desire an eternal quality of life. We look to pass that mindset to our leadership. We must set our affections on things above ...we must do that together (Colossians 3.1-2). If our church leadership doesn't take ownership in what we are doing, they will not invest their time, talent, or treasure. We must bring them to understanding when it comes to eternal equity.

Focusing on a Few

Jesus believed in leadership training. He focused on a few to reach the multitude.

"Now it came to pass in those days that [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles" (Luke 6.12-13).

Why did Jesus pray all night? He did so because leadership choices are important. He was laying the foundation for the church. He did so by focusing on a few. A. B. Bruce in his book, The Training of the Twelve, wrote:

"This careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured [that] the Teacher's influence on this world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial impressions in the minds of the many."

What does this quote from Bruce teach us?

- Jesus sought to reach the minds of the few. These are the minds of 12 men, one of whom was lost.
- Jesus did not seek after the superficial impressions in the minds of many (that's what most of the churches in our country do!) .
- People in our churches can be superficial in a Sunday morning crowd. The pastor is tempted to appease the masses in order to keep a crowd.
- Leadership training is culling out the few that need an investment of your time and energy. Good leaders focus on a few to reach many.

Jesus Reached Many

Jesus focused on a few in order to transfer His message and mission to the many. Allow me to paraphrase Eugene Peterson:

"Jesus, it must be remembered, restricted 9/10 of His ministry to 12 Jews, because that was the only way to reach all [Spanish-speaking people in California]."

Here's a good scenario I'm going to use with the leadership of our church.

"Three years from now, I'm going to be gone ...nobody will be here to replace me once I've left. So, how will we spend the next three years together?" What would you do?

- We would need to define key roles in terms of the foundations within our local churches. Preacher, teacher, pastor. Who will handle these responsibilities? How will they handle them? Are they biblically sound people?
- We would need to break the church ministry down into smaller units and put leaders over those units.
- We would need small groups and discipleship groups.
- Responsibility would shift to people taking over after the three-year period. Each person would need to determine what his or her part in the body is.
- Paul tells us clearly each person in our church has received a ministry, a giftedness from the Holy Spirit for the common good of everyone.
- Jesus gave His ministry to His disciples. This is how He multiplied Himself. He appointed 12 so that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and drive out demons.
- Jesus reached a few to reach the multitude.

Delegating

"Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exodus 18.21).

How do we get people to shoulder the burden with us?

1. Be who you are. People like honest, real, genuine people. You are a disciple of Jesus too. Don't give people the idea that you cannot relate to them. Some have the philosophy of keeping a gap between themselves and the people they pastor. I think the Lord Jesus wants us to come alongside people. All of us are journeying toward the Celestial City. We are all pilgrims. The pastor hasn't arrived yet. We have our own problems, life-dominating sins, anxieties, and fears. People need to know this. We're on the same team not separate teams.
2. Share your limitations. People like to feel needed. They are needed. I can't visit hospitals when my immune system is weak. That puts me in a difficult position; so, I call on our men to do this for me. I'm not very gifted as a song-leader. But God has provided us with someone who is. We need one another.
3. Trust God to work through others. God isn't only working through you!
4. Encourage! Don't be distracted by your own self-importance. You aren't the center of attention in the local church; Jesus is. Celebrate what others are doing. Give credit where credit is due.

Self-Leadership

If you want to lead others well, you begin by paying attention to your inner man. You can only take people as far as you yourself have gone.

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4.16).

Paul speaks to Timothy and by extension to you and me. You save yourself and those who hear you as you take heed of your own life and to doctrine. Watch your life; watch your doctrine.

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

A bishop is an overseer ...a leader. There are skills to be developed by the leader: He must have the ability to teach. But most of the things listed are inside-out character issues like sober-mindedness, self-control (temperate), and respectability. If we don't know how to take care of our own household well,

how can we take care of the church of God? If we don't know how to take care of our own interior life, how are we going to be used of God to bring spiritual healing to others?

The Goal of Leadership

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord " (2 Corinthians 3.18).

- Transformation into Christlikeness is the goal of all discipleship and leadership.
- "We all" speaks of all the people we will lead
- "With unveiled face" points us to Moses who was in the presence of the Lord. His face radiated with God's glory. He had to cover it so that people wouldn't see it. Today, we come before the Lord with unveiled face because of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no pretense about what we need to be or who we are.
- We behold the glory of the LORD. We move from one level of glory to the next as we focus on the Lord Jesus. His character becomes our character as we behold Him.
- This is a process - from glory to glory ...just as by the Spirit of the Lord. We don't do it ourselves. It is the work of God the Holy Spirit. He shapes us into what He wants us to be.

If we are going to be effective leaders, then we better be shaped and formed into the image of Christ. We have what we need for this to happen. Then, we can model spiritual excellence for others.

Addendum: While this workshop focused upon training men for leadership in the church, what do we do when it comes to training women? Do we see women in any way as leaders within the church? I think we should. Women ought to shepherd other women.

1. Women best model godly femininity. Women need a female perspective that enables a woman to apply biblical passages strategically.
2. Women process pain differently than men. Men typically want steps toward healing. Women want someone to really listen to them, to make sure their feelings are validated, and then to help lead her toward hope again.
3. Women understand women. They are created as life-bearers and life-nurturers. They can experience deep emotional pain on a level men cannot. They can also experience great joy. Both of these are best understood by women.
4. Women have natural shepherding abilities ...they are nurturers. Women simply process from a different frame of reference than men. Their frame of reference begins with concerned involvement. They have deepened empathy for people, particularly for other women.
5. If women shepherd women in your church, you won't be in a compromising situation. It's unhealthy to meet with another women as a pastor over an extended period of time. You don't want to have that kind of emotional connection with a woman in your church. When you help a woman that has been overwhelmed with something for a long time, healthy boundaries can break down in a way they won't when women shepherd women.

6. Women are sometimes unable to receive shepherding from men. They have painful past experiences with brother, uncles, fathers, co-workers, husbands, and sometimes pastors. A woman's soul must be open for a shepherd to provide cleansing. Women will resist shepherding from you if they have been wounded by a man.
7. If women shepherd women in your church, then you are maximizing your effectiveness as a pastor. Get some nuts and bolts ideas about setting up such a team of women from the book, *Shepherding a Woman's Heart* by Beverly Hislop.
8. Women are given the gifts of the Spirit for shepherding other women. All the gifts given to men are given to women. I did not say "roles" but gifts.
9. Women shepherding women is a biblical concept. Look at Titus 1-2. Older women are to train younger women. Study Ruth's relationship with Naomi or Elizabeth's relationship with Mary.

Readings for Further Study:

I use Logos Bible Software. I'm heavily invested in this product. I'm so busy and it is so helpful. The list below are resources available through Logos. One resource I have found incredibly helpful for counseling is the Journal of Biblical Counseling.

- Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling
- Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions
- Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry
- Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible
- 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition
- 5 Things Anyone Can Do to Lead Effectively
- Drawing Close to God
- Faithlife Study Bible
- Preaching the Word: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—To Guard the Deposit
- The Big Book on Small Groups
- The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church
- Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time

See Also:

- Leadership that Works: Hope and Direction for Church and Parachurch Leaders in Today's Complex World
- Shepherding a Woman's Heart: A New Model for Effective Ministry to Women
- Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions
- Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community
- Chaplains of the Bible: Inspiration for Those Who Help Others in Crisis
- Leading from the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership

- Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures
- Planting Missional Churches
- A Primer in Pastoral Care
- A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling
- Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry
- Organizational Leadership: Foundations and Practices for Christians
- The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Volumes 1–3
- The Master Plan of Evangelism
- The Training of the Twelve; or, Passages out of the Gospels, Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus under Discipline for the Apostleship
- Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time