

The Essential Tasks of Missions - Training Leaders

The third major task of missions is training leaders. As stated earlier, in rapidly maturing Christian movements leaders are seldom *selected*; they are *found*. They are raised up by God while the whole church is being nurtured to perform various ministries within the body. Congregational nurturing, therefore, must always precede or be coupled with leadership training. In the midst of this congregational nurturing God raises up leaders and places them in the body "just as he wants them to be" (1 Cor. 12:18). Once these leaders rise to the surface, they should be specifically trained.

Definition of Leadership Training

Christian leadership training is *the equipping of "God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"* (Eph. 4:12). Christ is the prime mover of leadership development because he has provided, by his grace, specific gifts to the body (Eph. 4:7-8, 10, cf. 3:7) and thus prepares various leaders (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) to nurture the body (Eph. 4:11). *Equipping* infers a process of growing to maturity: The separated become unified; infants grow to maturity; the empty attain to the "fullness of Christ"; those blown about by worldly winds or "tossed back and forth" by non-Christian cultural currents become anchored in Christ (Eph. 4:13-14). The *works of service* of these leaders can thus be summarized by the phrase *spiritual formation*. The leaders, performing their diverse tasks, guide the entire body to "grow up in . . . Christ" by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). These ministries of spiritual formation lead to building up of the body of Christ to become a mature church. A mature church is one in which all parts are related to Christ and joined to each other, while the body continues to grow as "each part does its work" and "builds up itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

In the social sciences leadership is frequently defined as *the process of influence*. Leaders are those who exert influence over followers within the immediate situation and overall community in which they live. Leaders shape the goals, values, and worldviews of the people within these contexts (Elliston 1992, 21). Clinton defines a Christian leader as one who brings the Christian influence into his particular group or situation. He writes that a leader is "a person with God-given capacity and with a God-given responsibility to *influence* a specific group of God's people toward God's purposes for the group" (1988, 245). Although it contains truth, the influence metaphor has its dangers. Too frequently influence is understood as power to manipulate the material and social order. When influence is defined as power, it stands in contrast to biblical metaphors.

Elliston suggests three dominant metaphors that define leadership in scripture (1992, 23-24). First, Christian leaders are *servants* who voluntarily submit themselves to the lordship of Christ and sovereignty of God. This meaning of the term is frequently inversed: the mighty become servants of the weak. Christ "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Just as divinity serves humanity, those "great" in this world must become servants (Mark 10:43). Second, Christian leaders are *shepherds* who tenderly care for their flock. This analogy implies

that the shepherds feed, protect, and guide their flock. They know the names of the sheep and will even lay down their lives for their sheep. The true shepherd "gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart" (Isa. 40:11). Third, leaders are *stewards* who "are entrusted with the message of the gospel, gifts for ministry, and [God's mission] to perform" (Elliston 1992, 24). Stewards are "trustees" guarding "what has been entrusted to [their] care" (1 Tim. 6:20). Blending the metaphors of servant, shepherd, and steward produces the distinctive hue of leadership intended by God.

Types of Leaders

Vibrant Christian movements require different kinds of leaders. Five types will be described in this section.

Type A leaders are lay servants who provide massive grassroots leadership within local churches. Within the church they may serve as cell group leaders, Bible class teachers, youth organizers, and committee participants and leaders. Within the community they serve as beacons of light for the gospel--the front-line soldiers of the kingdom of God. Unbelievers have most contact with this type of leader, and new believers are typically nurtured by *Type A* leaders in vibrant, growing churches.

Type B are also lay leaders, but they have more authority and broader influence than *Type A* leaders. They serve as elders and deacons of local churches, supervisors of Sunday School programs, mentors of cell group leaders, and lay counselors. In various mission contexts, especially in the Two Thirds World, *Type B* leaders are unpaid evangelists who preach in local churches or work to initiate other churches. Like *Type A* leaders, their ministries are direct or face-to-face but, unlike *Type A* leaders, their influence extends beyond their immediate group.

Type C leaders in Western contexts are full-time ministers in local congregational settings involved in face-to-face ministry but are likely to be bivocational in the Two Thirds World. Their sphere of influence is the local church and the community in which community of believers exists. They usually have some form of theological education which has equipped them to preach, teach, and evangelize. Their influence is generally deep but not broad--significant among those to whom they minister but not extensive beyond their local area.

Type D leaders have a regional influence much wider than in the church or agency in which they work. They serve as full-time ministers of multi-staff or multi-cell churches, as administrators of small agencies, or as missionaries planting churches, nurturing new Christians to maturity, and training leaders in a domestic or foreign context. These leaders have completed a formal system of training and their influence reaches beyond the people with whom they personally relate (adapted from Elliston 1992, 31).

Christian leaders who have national or international influence are called *Type E*. These are highly competent professional leaders, who because of their writing, teaching, and speaking, greatly influence the nature of ministry. They provide the philosophical models

out of which ministry occurs. Although much of their ministry is indirect, they influence many people. Type D and E leaders, to some degree, must remain Type A and B leaders in order to continue to be connected to real life.

Understanding these different types of leaders enables local and national church leaders to make plans for appropriate leadership training. After considering these types of leaders, it becomes apparent that mature churches need hundreds of Type A and B leaders but, in many contexts, no program for training them exists. For effective evangelism to occur all people in a community must be influenced personally, face-to-face. Elliston says: "The number of people one may . . . directly influence at a worldview level may range between ten and twenty." If there are 100,000 people in a community and if leaders relate to an optimum of ten people personally within the community, 10,000 Type A leaders are needed, 1,000 Type B, 100 Type C, ten Type D, and one Type E (1992, 31). Since Types C, D, and E leaders usually have a broad theological education, they tend to understand leadership training only in formal terms: Leadership training is interpreted as formal training. Specifically, what types of training do Types A and B need? Broadly, what modes of training are effective for different types of leaders?

Modes of Leadership Training

A study of curriculum theory is significant in planning the training of leaders. Elliston writes,

Curriculum theory suggests that the broad outlines of the results can be predicted from the kinds of educational structures and processes which are employed. One can look at the goals and then work backward to design or modify the structures and processes to match the goals. Or, we can begin with a structure and predict the kind of results we are likely to achieve.

(1988, 211)

Curriculum theory differentiates among three modes of training--the formal, nonformal, and informal. Effective leadership training blends these modes of training into different combinations in order to train various types of leaders.

Formal Training. Formal training refers to classroom instruction within an organized school setting. This mode is extremely beneficial in conveying paradigms of thinking and information. Applying knowledge and developing communication skills are secondary. Formal education is hierarchically organized: teachers guide the learning process of students through syllabi and tests; teachers, in turn, are supervised by administrators, etc. Students are trained outside the arena in which they hope to minister and, upon completion of their training, they receive diplomas or certificates which attest to their level of training.

Formal modes of training have long been used by those of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Ezra established the synagogues for the purpose of teaching the law. Because of this firm

teaching many Jews retained their identity in Babylon and continued to believe God's promises to restore his people. Jewish rabbis, especially the Pharisees, embraced this form of training. Hillel wrote, "The more teaching of the law, the more life; the more school, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more reasonable action. He who gains a knowledge of the law gains life in the world to come" (Aboth 2.14). Paul was taught in this manner by the rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Origen of Alexandria established a school in Egypt "for elementary instruction in the faith," but this school also became an evangelistic agency when unbelievers began to attend (Green 1970, 204). Centers of formal education have been in the forefront of the mission movement of North America.

Nonformal Training. This mode of training is based on the premise that students most effectively learn through designed experiences in a deliberately organized program. The training, however, is both "non-programmatic" and "non-institutional" (Clinton 1988, 251). Edgar Elliston writes that nonformal education is "planned, staffed, and organized, but structured outside the normal school system" (1988, 212).

Currently the Department of Missions of Abilene Christian University is initiating a program to combine formal and nonformal training. It is felt that formal education alone is not adequate to prepare candidates for the mission field. All students are mentored in four significant areas of development: (1) *character* (C) that reflects the mind of Christ in areas of values, ethics, emotional stability, and self-discipline; (2) *ability* (A) that is demonstrated by competence in use of scripture, mission principles, interpersonal skill, and public communication; (3) *relationship with God* (R) as evidenced by consistent, meaningful communion with the Lord through the Christian disciplines; and (4) *experience* (E) as an active follower of Christ in a local community of believers, including evangelism, nurturing, and cross-cultural practicums. At a *Foundations Retreat* during the first month of school, initial assessments are made in each of these four areas, described by the acronym CARE, and students are prayerfully joined to a mentor and small group. Within a week after the retreat students meet with their mentors to review the results of their assessments and set objectives for the coming semester. Between two and four objectives are mutually agreed upon by student and mentor for focused attention during each semester. These objectives are clearly written and signed by both student and mentor. Mentors meet with students as a group on a monthly basis to deepen personal relationships and individually with trainees at least twice a year to assess progress made on their objectives and plan for the coming semester. Each year a week-long assessment period occurs for all students who will graduate within the year. Results of this assessment are used by students and mentors to clarify the most significant objectives to be addressed during their remaining months in training. At the close of academic work, a board of review within the department considers students' overall development and readiness for the mission field. Based on this review, students receive a recommendation concerning their ministry for the next twenty-four months. This recommendation takes one of three forms: (1) recommended for mission work; (2) recommended with qualification, with specific remediation suggested; (3) not recommended for the following twenty-four months, with specific remediation suggested. It is understood that most of those in the third category are channeled into other disciplines by the mentoring process before reaching the end of their program of study. Students commended for

mission work (#1 and #2 above) receive a certificate of commendation signed by their mentor and the department chairperson. This program, although coupled to a formal educational institution, is an example of nonformal education.

Informal Training. Informal training "uses life-activities as the basis for purposeful training" (Clinton 1988, 244). This type of training is highly relational yet is "unstructured in the sense of being controlled and deliberately planned" (Elliston 1988, 212). This mode is participatory: Teachers and students participate together in accomplishing the mission of God. Teachers model effective behavior in ministry while students learn how to minister. The following account relates how I informally trained two Kipsigis evangelists:

Each Wednesday I am presently working with two Christians, Michael Chepkwony and Johanna Lang'at, from the Kapsinendet church in Kipsigis to initiate a new church in a nearby village. Michael works as a night watchman at nearby tea estate, and Johanna is the overseer of the local cattle dip. I chose these two men because they both have the God-given gifts to plant churches and nurture new Christians to maturity. They also desire to teach relatives and friends in an adjoining village.

Michael, Johanna, and I meet at the village about 12:00 each Wednesday. We first go from house to house visiting those we think might be interested. Later in the day we have a large meeting in one of the homes of our first contact people. In these home visits and evangelistic meetings Michael and Johanna learn the fundamental Gospel message and how to teach this message to different types of people as they hear me teach. I also gently guide and encourage them as they teach. When the first converts were baptized, I began to teach them how to nurture new Christians to maturity. We then worked to equip our new brothers and sisters in Christ to teach the first principles of the kingdom of God and the gospel of Christ to their relatives and nurture them in the Christian lifestyle.

I remember that day when the first five people were baptized in Mombwo. I told Michael, "These are your friends who now believe in Christ. It is your responsibility to baptize them." On the way to the river, Michael pulled me off to the side and said, "I have never baptized anyone. Would you show me how?" I then demonstrated to Michael how to baptize.

This training is informal. It is based on the perspective that Christian ministry must not only be taught but also modeled. We have grown to believe that formal and nonformal training without concurrent informal training is inadequate.

(Van Rheenen 1983, 40-41)

Peter Wagner writes that informal training is one of the great reasons for the growth of Pentecostals in urban contexts of Latin America (1973, 89-100). Evangelists conducted "seminaries in the streets" to train developing Christians for effective ministry. In fact,

before Christian leaders could be ordained, they had to start a self-supporting church. Jonathan Chao comments that the training of itinerant evangelists in "seminaries of the field" is the cause of the great growth of the church in China (Chao 1989, 58). Jesus took twelve men, as diverse as a tax collector and a Zealot, revamped their conception of reality, and molded them into a cohesive group. He appointed these twelve "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mark 3:14).

Guidelines for Effective Leadership Training

So far, five types of leaders have been discussed and three modes of training them. This section seeks to specifically apply these understanding: What modes of training best equip different types of leaders? How do training patterns change as a movement matures? Although the need for training Christian leaders exists in every developing and mature church, modes and methodologies of training vary within each congregation and from context to context. The following four general guidelines are, however, fundamental in every context.

First, leaders need training appropriate for their ministries and time schedules. Type A and B leaders almost always need informal training to effectively carry out their ministries within the body. Small group leaders learn to facilitate a group while serving as interns under small group leaders; Bible class teachers learn to teach while studying in Bible classes; lay youth ministers learn to organize activities by participating in youth programs; committee leaders learn the functions of their committees while serving as members of them; new Christians learn to evangelize by seeing older Christians model evangelism. Formal and nonformal training, however, greatly enhance what these lay leaders learn by experience. Week-long or weekend formal seminars effectively provide lay leaders with the theologies and philosophies which undergird their ministries. Models of nonformal learning provide task-oriented experiences and exercises which greatly enhance what has been learned informally. Type C, D, and E leaders generally require some level of formal training since the informational undergirding required is broad. How can one preach the message if he has not studied it thoroughly? How can one organize the curriculum of a large church if he does not know the resources available? However, years of formal training without corresponding informal and nonformal training create informational nerds, who are able to relate ideas conceptually without personally ministering. Many of the disciplines required of Type D leaders are best learned through nonformal learning and many of the specialties of Type E leaders through informal learning.

Second, effective training integrates various modes of training. In the following case study I am working with leaders from Independent churches in Kipsigis to train them to initiate a new church. Elements of formal, nonformal, and informal education are all present.

Presently I am working each Thursday for seven weeks with twelve vocational evangelists of the Kamaget and Kipsuter churches in Kipsigis. My purpose in

these weeks is to spiritually, theologically, and practically equip these evangelists to initiate and mature a new church in an adjoining rural village. To accomplish this goal, I combine aspects of formal, nonformal, and informal training.

Each Thursday I arrive at a designated home in Kamaget about 12:00 after an hour and a half trip from my home in Sotik. After a fellowship meal the evangelists and I discuss and apply the content of a home-study course that they have been studying during the week. The topics covered during the seven weeks are: God--The Source of Mission; Christ--The Message of Mission; The Holy Spirit--The Power of Mission; The Church--God's People in the World; The Church--The Embodiment of God's Mission; Paul--The Preacher; and Nurturing--Preparing New Christians to Live within the Kingdom of God.

An initial planning session was used to help organize the course. During this session, I taught a lesson outlining fundamental Christian motivations for evangelism. These motivations were then discussed at length and compared to earthly, pride-directed motivations. We then prayed as a group for God to spiritually work in our hearts to prepare us as his messengers and help us select a nearby village to initiate a new congregation. After prayer, we selected Chepng'ung'ul as the focus of our seven-week evangelistic effort because there was no organized church there and many people in Chepng'ung'ul have kinship relationships with Christians in Kamaget. Because of the prayers and mutual consent of the Christians, we feel that God guided us in the selection of Chepng'ung'ul.

After the village had been selected, we began discussing key people in Chepng'ung'ul who would not only be receptive to the message of Jesus but also could become leaders in a newly-forming church. Five names were then written on the blackboard and prayer made to God for each of these people. We then selected one older man and his family unit to initially teach and prayed that they might become the host family for the initial evangelism meetings in the village. Evangelists from Kamaget were chosen to go and make plans for the meeting for the following week. Finally, I gave each developing evangelist the first lesson to study before our meeting the following week.

On subsequent Thursdays we continued to meet at Kamaget for our evangelists' meeting at 12:00. This was our period of interaction about the lesson of the week. About 2:30 p.m. we began our trip to Chepng'ung'ul for our "practicum". As the weeks progressed, new evangelists from Kamaget were learning what spiritual resources God had given them and how to organize a plan of evangelism to initiate and mature a new church. Timothy's were trained in action to become Pauls. Disciples were trained to become apostles.

As I write this, we are in the fourth week of training at Kamaget. In our third week thirty seekers attended a vibrant meeting at Chepng'ung'ul. One evangelist, Edwin Rono, daily teaches people house to house in this village. He also has

started a Sunday school for children there. Kamaget evangelists are saying, "We know that God is working through us to start the church at Chepng'ung'ul."

(Van Rheezen 1983, 38-40)

The effectiveness of this methodology is attested by the fact that the church at Chepng'ung'ul has grown to become one of the strongest churches in this area of Kipsigis. In this example the material studied by the evangelists in their homes each week was formal, most of the activities in the weekly training session were nonformal with a small portion of the formal, and the late-afternoon trips to evangelize Chepng'ung'ul were informal.

A third guideline for effective leadership training is that modes and methods of training should vary depending on the maturity of the Christian movement. When churches are newly established and Christians know little of the Christian lifestyle, almost all training must be done informally. New Christians are trained to lead prayers, read the Bible, share their faith, and live a Christian life within the arena of life. They learn through effective modeling, which must continue even when churches grow to maturity with their own Type C, D, and E leaders. When early Christians grow toward maturity and a sufficient number of Christian leaders develop, short intensive courses are of significant value. They provide leaders with knowledge of scripture and understandings of practical ministry in a short period of time. When developing leaders study together, motivation is also greatly enhanced. Leadership training by extension, as illustrated in the above paragraph, becomes an alternative. As the movement matures, nationals and missionaries working together must make plans for the more structured training required for Type C, D, and E leaders. This will give the movement both cohesion and the necessary formal training for developing Christian leaders.

Fourth, churches must be initiated with a comprehensive strategy for phasing out missionary personnel once local leaders have been trained. Steffen writes that too often strategies develop piecemeal. New missionaries "focus more on `phase-in' activities (e.g., evangelism and discipleship) than on `phase-out' activities (e.g., activities that would empower nationals to develop leadership among themselves with an eye toward ministry that reproduces)" (Steffen 1993, 3). He suggests a phase-out model consisting of five distinct stages: preentry, preevangelism, evangelism, postevangelism, and phase-out. Missionaries' roles change during each phase. During the preentry stage, missionaries are primarily learners. During ensuing stages, phase-out oriented missionaries develop the overlapping roles of evangelists, teachers, resident advisors, itinerant advisors, and absent advisors while continuing to be learners (Steffen 1993, 24). Church movements are initiated with the understanding that missionaries will eventually phase-out when their tasks have been completed. Hopefully, they will also phase *into* new areas when they phase *out of* old ones. One of the saddest events in missions is seeing mature missionaries leaving the mission field when they are still in their prime.

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