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Church-Based Training for Leaders

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5

Church-Based Leadership Training

The concept of developing leaders within the local church for some ministries is not a novel concept, nor does it meet with any opposition. For years churches have trained Sunday School teachers, assistant youth workers, visitation and evangelism teams and specific skills for assisting in the ministry of the churches. However, this will not be sufficient to train leaders of daughter churches, nor full-time ministry leaders. Typically, when someone is hired for a full-time church position the search begins in other churches (to get experienced, proven and talented personnel) or seminaries. The American way assumes a large pool from which to recruit seminary-trained personnel who looking for a better opportunity to serve the Lord.

One of the weaknesses of this system of depending on seminary-trained leaders for a growing number of churches is the inevitable lack of experience. These men graduate with an abundance of head-knowledge in theology, perhaps of the original languages, preaching theory with a little practice, Bible awareness and without debt. Often graduates have never preached in a church, led a person to Christ, discipled a new believer, counseled a dysfunctional family, managed a church problem, led a deacon/elder board meeting, or created a vision plan for a local church.

The problem becomes a serious issue on the mission field where the American system is creating a major obstacle to multiplying churches exponentially. There is no "seminary" as we know it. Few, if any, pastors have graduated from any university program overseas. At best they have graduated from a Bible Institute (often a 3-year program). What is often called "seminary" overseas is not a post-university graduate program; rather it means a Bible Institute program for high school graduates (usually), which includes some studies of the original languages (at least Greek).

The world has changed drastically in the past decade, and phenomenally in the past century. The shifts from modern to postmodern, from critical to post-critical, from industrial to technological and from the enlightenment to post-enlightenment world. There are massive shifts in populations as well. By 2050, 1 of every 5 people will be Hispanic. In 1900 there were an estimated 50,000 Hispanic believers, but today there are over 80 million. Africa grew from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million in 2000. Asia is exploding with spontaneous expansion of the gospel. Large-scale conversions are predicted in India. A major organization predicts tens of thousands of new churches over the next few decades.

New Paradigms for Church Leadership

A paradigm is "an entire constellation of beliefs, techniques, and so on shared by members of a given community."

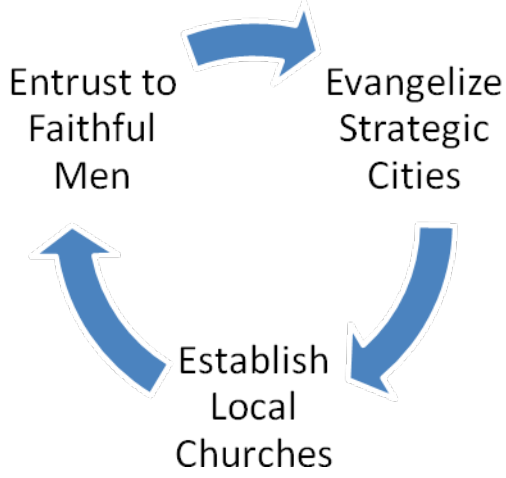
The Western church leadership paradigm depends on too many features that are not available around the globe: ease of finances, large salaries, technologies in music, computation,

radio-TV, sound-equipment, musical instruments, recording devices, etc. We have the ability to reproduce the style of highly trained professional church leadership and have generated a high expectation on the part of our congregations for super leaders to compete with other churches and with tele-evangelists. Formal theological education is a paradigm. All theological schools have highly trained professors, classrooms, tests, degrees, etc.

Mission fields that were planted by Western missionaries with the Western model, even on a reduced scale, have led the church into major bottle-necks of insufficient leadership for an exploding church. Dependency on training institutions which become more academic with each passing generation, tends towards increasing nominalism, and social focus. Following the traditional model millions upon millions will need to be raised to house the increasingly larger institutional buildings and to pay the needed leadership.

We need a new paradigm – church-based theological education – a paradigm based on the way Christ and His apostles developed leaders, which was very different from our institutional model.

The Pauline Cycle[1]

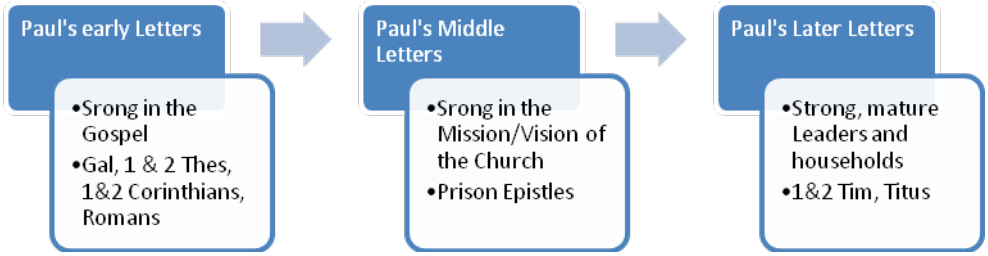


In the study of the four missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts a pattern becomes evident. Paul would go to strategic areas or cities where he had some contacts or open doors. Once a new group of believers were converted, they were immediately gathered into a bond of fellowship as a local church. All the time he was teaching and equipping the members to become leaders as God gifted them. Soon he entrusted the ministry to those who proved faithful, often in a matter of months.

Later he maintained contact with them personally through letters, visits by Paul's trusted team members to establish them firmly in "the teaching," in order that they would be strong and not deceived by false teaching.

[1] Modeled after the BILD (Biblical Institute of Leadership Development) model of church-based training in Ames, Iowa.

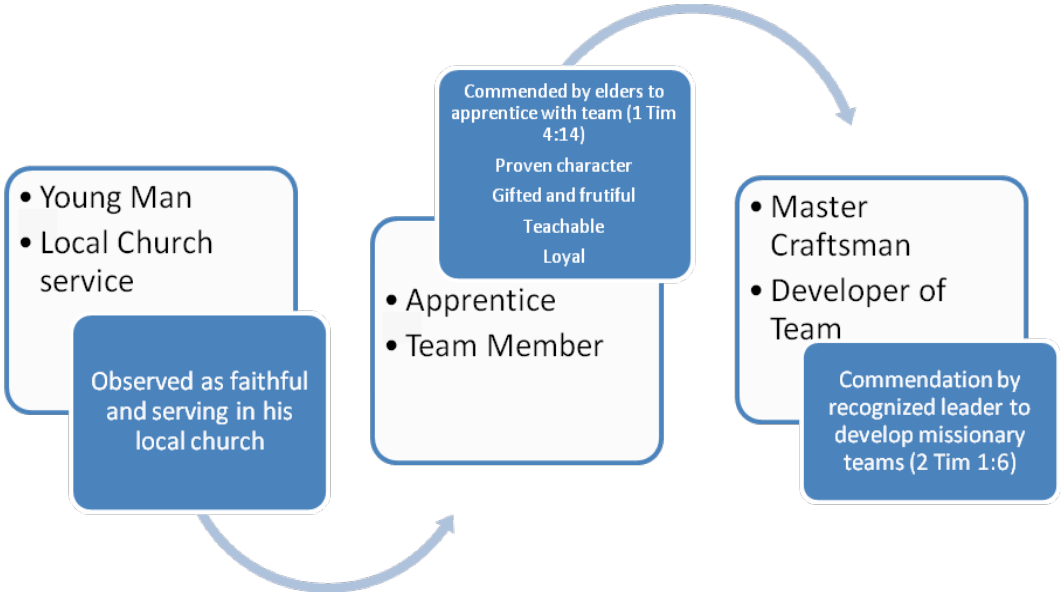
Paul's Letters as Tools of Establish the Churches



The Early Church devoted itself to the "Apostle's teachings" (Acts 2:42), which was referred to as "the faith," "the deposit," and "sound doctrine," which they were to master and cling to without wavering. There is no clear "doctrinal statement" as we have developed in the Western church, but rather elements of the doctrine are weaved throughout the epistles coming out of real life situations, that now need to be understood in their context, deriving principles that can be fit over other circumstances of life. Doctrine today is seen as cold, boring and useless, because most were derived out of controversy, rather than out of practical applications.

The biblical model of the Pauline cycle – the training of leaders – is evident by Paul's development of leaders in his ministry. There seemed to be two areas of this leadership development: (1) local leaders or elders and deacons, which was based on age, respect, character, family and sound doctrine; (2) ministers of the gospel (Timothy and Titus-types) who moved throughout the churches, strengthening and establishing them. Timothy worked closely with Paul as a sort-of apprentice, for a number of years (10-15 years) until he was commended to the leadership of a church.

Paul and Timothy Model (2 Tim 2:2)



The model that consistently appears in Scriptures is one of local church focus and training *in* the ministry, rather than *for* the ministry. The Western or Greek model of learning centers and official schools would eventually take over the responsibility of the training for the local churches with negative results.

Biblical reasons for CBT

In the Book of Acts the focus on starting churches and raising up leaders from within each local church was the key strategy in spreading the gospel message in a repeatable and multiplying movement (Acts 14:21-23), thus they became the sending agency (14:26-27). Nine of Paul's letters were addressed directly to a local church or churches in a region. Although Paul did not have any alternatives like Bible Institutes, he was training leaders in the Jewish tradition through mentors (as he had been by "at the feet of Gamaliel," Acts 22:3). He did not do his teaching at a formal training center, and therefore was respected by his peers due to his relationship to his mentor.

2 Timothy 2:2 [NET], "And entrust what you heard me say in the presence of many others as witnesses to faithful people who will be competent to teach others as well." Timothy was present when Paul taught many disciples in the founding of local churches. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Timothy was serving the church in Ephesus. He reviewed to Timothy some of the aspects of church life (1 Tim 5:19-22; 2 Tim 4:2-5) as he was applying them in his ministry. The "faithful people" (*anthropos* is generic to mean men and women) were *reliable* or *dependable* in the daily/weekly functions of the church. It is to say that those who are not functioning in a local church are not yet proven faithful to be trained. Titus, likewise, received special instruction in his epistle by Paul concerning his church ministries as an on-going on-the-job training (Titus 1:5-9).

Another key verse for CBT is Ephesians 4:11-13 where Paul declares that Christ gave various leaders to the church (4:11), with emphasis on the "he" in the original text. Without entering into a debate on the nature of the five categories of leaders,[2] their united purpose is clearly stated: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" ([NET]4:12). The entire church membership is gifted by the Spirit, and now must be trained by the leadership, to "serve" [*diaconia*, "aid, support, minister"]. There is an obligation of every church leader of every church to train the members for the areas of service that God has gifted them to fulfill. This duty or responsibility cannot be delegated outside the church because the "ministry" and "edifying" are related a the local "body of Christ." Furthermore, the objective is "until we all attain to the unity of the faith" in a practical bonding of individuals in a local church setting, and in "the knowledge of the Son of God," resulting in a "mature person" who is like his Master. Even when Paul taught in a teaching center for two years (Acts 19:9-10) his goal was the establishing of believers in a local church (Acts 20:17-38)

[2] The author holds that the first two, apostles and prophets, were given to the Church to deliver the special revelation and inspired text of the "foundation" of the church (Eph 2:20 and Acts 2:42), whereas the evangelists, pastors and teachers were to teach, exhort, preach and expound on the basis of this foundational, infallible text given in the foundation of the Church to edify and equip all the believers for their ministries (4:12).

Aquila and Priscilla are an excellent example of a teaching couple ministering to others.[3] While helping in the church at Ephesus, they took a gifted and knowledgeable teacher of Scriptures, Apollos, and "invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26[NIV]). More than likely the church in Ephesus met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:8, 19), they provide a direct example of training that occurs in the context of a local church.

Development of CBT

The church-based leadership training movement is a result of a number of other precursor movements that led to CBT. It began with the **Discipleship Movement**, especially during WWII, which was spear-headed by the Navigators, Campus Crusade and Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, especially on college campuses. Through the training the leaders of these movements an effective strategy began to develop through discipleship to mentoring for ministries.

In 1963 at the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, SA, teachers were struggling with the problem of how to prepare seminarians of a diverse background. The residential seminaries were producing pastors who were well-trained academically, but the graduates who had been subsidized by Western donations would only continue in the pastorate if the subsidy continued. When this did not materialize as expected enrollment declined.

Emilio Castro adds other factors which need to be considered: 1) The residential model encourages "professionalism," understood as a "competitive desire to climb the promotional ladder," something which should not be a part of the Christian community. 2) The residential/professional model is very difficult to sustain among a people who are already living in poverty, therefore the economic viability is called into question. 3) Extraction from the cultural milieu of the student makes it difficult for him to return to his former lifestyle. Barriers are raised that make it almost impossible for him to relate to his own people (Castro, 1983, p. x).

The traditional missionary model failed to capitalize on the natural leaders of a community, preferring to do it themselves or train young ambitious men who were unproven and unaccepted.

> The grave men of the church, the natural leaders of the village life, and the natural leaders of the church are silenced. The church is not led and administered by the people to whom all would naturally turn, but either by a foreigner, or by a young man who has come with a foreign education (Allen, 1962, p. 106)

The leaders of the Guatemala seminary became convinced that the Seminary would need to go to the student, especially to the natural leaders in the communities, instead of expecting the student to come to the seminary. Since the most respected leaders were already married and established in a profession (rather than young unproven men just out of high school), it would make sense to devise a way to train them without the need of uprooting them to another location. They

[3] They are mentioned six times by name in the NT (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19 and 2 Tim 4:19), and always mentioned together in their ministry!

developed a program of study during the week followed by a visit on the weekend by a professor to a gathering of students in a given area.

This technique and the need for more theological training, especially on the international scene brought the **TEE movement** (Theological Education by Extension). TEE was an attempt to train the leadership of churches that could not come to an Institute, primarily because of distance or work loads. The courses were the same as taught in the resident course, but these were written in self-teaching, programmed instruction modules, which were difficult to write and had to be designed for each age or educational level to be effective. Periodically the specialist, a Bible teacher from the institute or the missionary, would visit the different regional centers for a face-to-face encounter between professor and student to answer questions and clarify issues. This meant a considerable itineration and often inconsistencies due to other obligations, especially for the missionary.

Lester Hirst describes a typical program of theological education by extension and how it meets the needs of the church. He lists these objectives: 1) Training is programmed for every level of local church leadership; 2) Training takes into consideration the aspects considered to be important for leadership development. They are knowledge, skills, and character; 3) Courses are taught not only by outsiders, but local leaders are incorporated as teachers; 4) flexibility is allowed, and indeed, encouraged; 5) The training program is linked integrally to the local church (Hirst, 1986, pp. 420-424).

Programmed instruction is a teaching method utilizing a sequence of modules or paragraphs, followed by an immediate question, case study, or some form of responding to the information in the module. This response is immediately corrected somewhere nearby. The answers can be written upside down on the bottom of the page, on the next page, or along a column to one side of the paragraph. Usually it would be just below the answer area so it can be easily covered until after a response is made. This principle of "reaffirmation" is a key to the learning technique of programmed instruction, the pedagogical methodology of TEE.

As a spinoff of the programmed instruction technique ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) was started for small schools where the students could study at their own pace in different grades. Each student studies in his/her own cubical that enables them to learn individually from a text-based programmed instruction booklet, which follows the same procedure: paragraph of information, comprehensive question, interactive response or answer, and immediate correction or affirmation. This sequence is repeated sufficiently that specific learning objectives are met.

In the 70's the **Small Group Movement** swept across the churches decentralizing the ministry in local churches out to the homes of its members. The level of ministry accomplished demanded a series of training seminars that were designed to train the leaders of these small groups. These seminars were limited by experts who could come to the church or region for special training of future leaders.

The philosophy of church priority brought about the development of the CBT (Church Based Training) concept.

Advantages and Practicality

Specific needs of your ministry

Vital multiplication principles (Eph 4; 2 Tim 2)

Key role of the church

Distance Learning Approaches

Appendix A

Web sites for CBT:

Complete course description of Joe Wright in English and German at www.bao.at

More intensive training on a faster track can be found at Evangelical Academy (http://www.evak.at). These courses can be applied to a Master of Arts degree through Columbia International University.

The Church-Based Training International (CBTI) is a Church of Christ application of the CBT principles. There are a number of helpful articles worth reading that are collected from a number of sources including non-Church of Christ authors. See http://cbti.faithsite.com/content.asp?CID=3962

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