



EQUIPPING NATIONAL LEADERS in the CHURCH-PLANTING PROCESS

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Abstract: Building upon the thesis that leadership training is an aspect of discipleship, and therefore cannot just be program-driven, the seminar treats a variety of concrete steps—addressing the heart, head and hands of emerging leaders—to build leadership at each stage in the church-planting process.

Introduction

Everyone stand up! Remain standing if you can answer “yes” to the following questions. If at some point you have to answer “no,” sit down again:

- I am deliberately discipling at least one other person toward spiritual growth;
- A person I consider to be a leader has deliberately spent regular time with me over at least one year;
- I have read at least one book on leadership in the last year;
- I am debt-free.

If you're still standing you're well on your way to learn to become a leader of God's people. If you're seated, you can start today to begin to become a person who leads others in Christian growth. Here are a few things God has taught us about the process in the years we've served Him in Luxembourg...

LET'S ANALYZE THE TITLE OF THIS SEMINAR...

Take a moment to think about each of the terms in the title of this seminar. First, **equipping**. We're taking our inspiration here from Ephesians 4.12. Paul says the mission of gifted men given by Jesus Christ to the church is not to do all the work of the ministry, but to equip others for the work of the ministry. His phrase is *pros ton katartismōn tōn hagiōn*, “toward the outfitting of the saints...” The noun *katartismōs*, which is used only here in the New Testament, is related to a verb that can be translated a variety of ways depending upon the context. Note the wide semantic field and you'll get the feel of what it means to equip the saints: “equip, mend, restore, set in order, prepare, make ready, complete, create, arrange, fully qualify, make adequate, outfit.”¹ God uses Christian leaders in a church plant to outfit other people for ministry. A church planter doesn't “make” a leader; he equips and readies people whom God is already urging forward to do the work of the ministry.

Secondly, note the reference to **national** leaders. A church planter is easily seduced into doing everything himself because he often starts things up from scratch...and that means there aren't a whole lot of other people around to help! Besides, he has to report to his supporters that he's keeping busy and productive! But the focus of a church planter should not be the fulfillment of his own ministry objectives, but the multiplication of the ministry through the lives of national people.

Thirdly, note that I'm going to talk about **leaders**. I suppose a lot of people think a church planter is a guy who goes out somewhere to find followers. But if that's the way we think about church planting we're only looking a few years into the future. A church planter with a New Testament perspective is first of all a trainer of leaders. He's looking for people who will follow Christ so they can lead others to follow Christ. Why is this distinction so important? Because if suddenly he's removed from the scene, leaders whom he leaves behind will carry on what he's begun. So the most crucial people to equip in any church-planting project are the future leaders. I'm not talking about people with administrative or organizational gifts. I'm talking about leaders—people whom others follow to their benefit.

And lastly, please note that we've chosen the phrase **in the church planting process**. That's deliberate, too. We cannot wait to train leadership until the **end** of the church-planting process. We have to start training leaders from the beginning and carry on all the way through. Leadership training happens **in** the church planting process, not **after**. In fact, we could say that biblical leadership training **is** the church planting process, since it is the fleshing out of the Great Commission. If Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples of all the nations by (1) baptizing them (point-in-time event) and (2) teaching them to obey everything He taught (ongoing process until death), then Jesus was concerned about the ongoing

¹ καταρτίζω, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 418.

reproduction of believers into the next generation. Let's unpack this a bit...

LEADERSHIP TRAINING IS AN ASPECT OF DISCIPLESHIP

Training leaders and discipling Christians are organically linked. But I'm not sure I picked that up when I was doing my studies. Back in the '60s and '70s when I was going to school people were really beginning to write about leadership in earnest, and you could take courses on this to learn to be a leader. Perhaps you, too, think about leadership training in terms of a program—perhaps a class, a course of study, a diploma, a certificate. But leadership training cannot be reduced to programs, even if we need some structure to get across leadership principles and practices. Leadership training is far more relational than that. It's not just getting leadership theory into a person's memory bank; it's teaching obedience to Christ so a person can lead another person toward obedience to Christ. That has to be done through knowing a person and working on the daily habits and disciplines of life.

Anyone in the local church who loves Christ and who is growing in Christ can begin to lead others in spiritual growth, whether or not he or she is an office-holder. Leadership development is bringing people to greater maturity in Christ so they can reproduce what they are, know and do in the next generation. That's our objective in Europe—by the enabling grace of God we want to be used by Him to train a broad team of national people who can contribute to the planting and nurturing of new churches into the next generation. Can you see the multiplication dynamic in that?

When we arrived in Luxembourg in the dead of winter in 1976, I had on my mind the mission of evangelism and grouping a committed few believers around us in our little city of 100,000 people. But as the years have passed, God has increasingly impressed upon us the need to teach and train the next generation to start churches beyond that single project in Luxembourg city. If we were going to be faithful to God's plans for us, we must prepare people in our city to plant reproducing churches in the wider region, in other places in Europe, and around the world. That meant that as a church planter I had to spend more and more of my time in teaching and training others to do every aspect of the ministry of the local church, so that if we were suddenly removed they could not only carry on the ministry of the local church there, but have impetus to start more of them, with or without a missionary present.

Perhaps you are asking, don't all missionaries do this? Not necessarily. I spoke some time ago with a student who recently graduated from a Bible institute in France where I teach a number of classes. He has been invited to serve in a church where a missionary pastor will soon be passing on the baton to him. The young man has a lot of questions. He's discovering that the people have heard all about the gospel, but not much else. They are new believers who have remained untaught, even after many years of the missionary's ministry in that city. The new fellow is trying to bring in more Bible teaching and leadership training, but he's finding people are hearty in their resistance. Why? Perhaps because the church planter thought too narrowly about his mission. If his purpose had been to prepare new believers who could train others, perhaps greater eagerness to learn and serve would reign today in that church.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING STARTS BY LOOKING FOR FAITHFULNESS

All this is pretty daunting in the first few years after you begin to feel reasonably comfortable in a new language. How can you start to train leaders from the beginning of your ministry? Well, do you remember Paul's last canonical letter? In 2 Timothy 2.1-2 Paul wrote that the young apostolic delegate from Derbe and Lystra—then hard at work in Ephesus—must be strong in God's grace to pass on to faithful men what he had heard from Paul in the presence of many witnesses. Timothy must pass on the whole counsel of God to faithful men. That's Paul's rewording of Matthew 28.19-20. But to pass all this on to faithful men, Timothy would first have to find them. And for a modern church planter to train leaders from the beginning of his ministry, he must first **identify** faithful men.

How could Timothy spot them? What was he supposed to look for? Do a little word study on this term in the New Testament and you get some clues on how to discern faithfulness. Maybe a few concrete suggestions will help:

1. **Look for people who are faithful in little things.** Jesus affirmed that the person who is faithful in little things is also faithful in big things (Luke 16.10). That's a great principle to go on. Potential leaders are the people who learn to pay attention to details in their own personal life. They don't have to be badgered about this year after year; they learn to do it. They're conscientious. On the other hand, people whom you can't trust to follow through on keeping appointments, being on time, keeping their word, returning a borrowed book, etc., and who are not willing to change and learn new patterns, will not be God-honoring leaders. Their followers will just get frustrated. So when looking for a potential leader to train in the things of God, look for a person you can trust with little things.

2. **Look for people who are trustworthy stewards of material things.** The context of Jesus' discussion was the "little thing" of money management (Luke 16.9, 11-13). The principle is assumed again in the parable of the just and unjust stewards in Matthew 24. Find a person who manages his money responsibly (pays taxes, avoids debt, pays his bills on time, does not over-extend his family's budget, etc.) can be trusted with training for the larger stewardship of people's lives. That's why I asked you to stay standing if you are debt-free. Lots of American students and young adults are drowning in debt, and it's now one of the main reasons why they don't serve the Lord abroad. This is a big item—pay attention to it! Conscientious money management and the general stewardship of material things is one sign of potential leadership in far more precious spiritual matters.
3. **Look for people who are interested in others.** Paul said to the Corinthian church that Timothy himself was a "faithful son in the Lord" (2 Cor. 4.16, NKJV). Why would Timothy get a title like that? I think Phil. 2.19-23 (NKJV) tells us a major part of the answer: ***"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me."*** In a word, Timothy was genuinely concerned about other people. You can entrust leadership responsibility to people who have that kind of unselfishness.

Leaders for the emerging local church can't afford to be self-absorbed. Leadership requires sacrifice. Paul spends a lot of time driving this home in 2 Timothy 2.3ff. Leadership is like the self-sacrificing life of the farmer, the soldier and the champion athlete. Leadership requires enduring hardness and persecution, which are the lot of all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3.12). If you put a person in leadership in the local church who's interested in his own advancement, in his own image, in his own comfort, you don't have a spiritual leader.

You may wonder if people just come ready-made with these qualities. I hesitate to be dogmatic with a question like that; life is full of surprises. Sometimes the people you least expect to grow in grace are the ones who make the most progress in the long run, and sometimes the ones who show the most promise are a disappointment when the going gets tough. It is possible for a person to begin well and end poorly, like Asa, Solomon's great grandson (2 Chronicles 14-16) and Demas (2 Timothy 4.10). But we need to start somewhere. So even if we have no guarantees about the future, we need to look for marks of faithfulness when we seek people to train for leadership in the emerging church plant.

TASKS TO INTEGRATE INTO DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS

If you think you've found a person who's trustworthy, what do you do with that person to train him for leadership? If you're not going to focus on a class or program first of all, what kinds of things can you do ***informally*** to address the head, the heart and the hands for leadership development? Let me humbly suggest a few things that have helped us in our work in Luxembourg . . .

1. **THE HEART (spiritual life).** Here are a few projects you can take on with people you're seeking to train for spiritual leadership, even before you leave for a foreign country. They focus on the foundational level of a person's relationship with God.
 - a. **Do Scripture memory.** Years ago a US Army colonel came to the church in Luxembourg. On the first day he visited we asked him and his family for lunch after the service. He told me he was looking for a partner to learn Scripture by memory. So I proposed he come to my house—I needed to do better on that assignment myself! For three years we met every Monday morning early before he went to the office.

Ever since then I've looked for men I can do Scripture memory with. I've often met with fellows over breakfast once a week. I work on my own Scripture memory projects while I'm driving. Right now Kathy cooks a hot meal each Thursday evening for two young adult men who are learning 1 John with me. We talk about many other things as well in the process. This is long-term discipleship that touches every area of their lives. We notice that memorizing the Bible is a bath for the soul. I recommend this as a great way to test spiritual interest, motivation, perseverance and desire to obey the Scripture, all at the same time.
 - b. **Teach Bible study methods and prayer one-on-one.** For several years I have met with a Luxembourg/Filipino couple (both from a staunch Roman Catholic background) to read the Bible and learn how to teach the Bible. We started shortly after Jean showed interest in the gospel following a crisis in his life. We read through *Stranger on the Road to Emmaus* (John Cross, GoodSeed) in its entirety. In the process he trusted the Lord. His wife Lani had

trusted Christ a bit earlier through the church's ladies Bible study. Then we moved to a very simple "chapter summary" Bible study method (see appendix) and used them all the way through the gospel of Luke. By this time Jean and Lani wanted to do the studies together. We dealt with every problem passage in that book as it came up. Jean (a studious type) spontaneously went beyond the chapter summary sheets to develop materials in far greater depth. By the time we were finished Luke, they were itching to help others learn the Bible. So we kept going in Acts, which was the book I had started to preach expositively on Sunday mornings. We dropped the chapter summary technique and went to a series of study questions I prepared for them on each chapter. When we got together Fridays, we'd go over their answers to those questions. And we worked on lesson plans for the teen group they'd agreed to teach in the meanwhile. We used the personal study as a launchpad for their ministry to others. It's been very gratifying to them and many other people have benefitted. They're people who pray for others and are growing rapidly in dedication to God and to the people they serve.

- c. **Meet regularly with individuals.** I try to meet monthly with almost all our core men one-on-one. Paul (South African, finance committee member, SS teacher, worship service leader) and I get together once a month for pizza at lunch. We discuss his family, his growth, his own struggles at work. Jean (Luxembourger, leader of the teen group, translator, preacher) and I get together for lunch once a month at the meeting room. Rhey (Filipino, leader of the Tagalog outreach, preacher) and I meet each week as he reads a book aloud in English and we discuss it together. Luc (Luxembourger, treasurer, worship service leader) and I get together less frequently, but when we do it's over lunch as well. Kjell (Norwegian, worship service leader, personal worker) meets with me on Monday nights for the doctrine class, for the bi-weekly counseling class, and the prayer meetings. With all these men we speak about how they're doing in their families, how they're growing and what they're learning. These are discipleship relationships, and just spending time with these men helps train them for leadership in the local church. I also meet once a month with the whole group of men in a "Mentoring for Ministry" meeting, where we pray, discuss a book, and conduct church business and long-term planning.

To see how well you are doing training leaders with one-on-one contact like this, check your agenda and your wallet. If you have a lot of time with leaders one-on-one or in small groups, and if you are spending money to get time with them, then you are giving effort to leadership training.

2. **THE HEAD (Bible knowledge, theology, personal wisdom for ministry).** Church leaders need to know more than where to get information; they need to know the Scriptures. We do several things to upgrade their familiarity with the Bible and Bible truth:
 - a. **Teach doctrine and Bible study methods.** Over the years we've developed a five-year doctrine class that uses the church's doctrinal statement as an outline for an adult doctrine class. It's highly interactive and people enjoy it. When they travel to visit their relatives in other parts of the world, they often find themselves teaching this class's contents when they witness and answer questions. I don't know what you think, but I think that's leadership training!
 - b. **Teach the link between doctrine and practice.** It's not enough to help people know what the Bible teaches. They need to see why it's important. They must understand the living links between truth and life's issues and problems. That's why in the doctrine class I emphasize the organic tie-in between every area of doctrine and how we live. If people can get to the point where they articulate these things, a vital part of discipleship has been achieved.
 - c. **Train people to help people solve problems.** We've organized classes in counseling over the years and have found a solid core of people interested in this training in the last year. We meet twice a month for 2-3 hours each session. Much of this can be text-driven, given the huge library of materials available from CCEF, *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, etc. We have used the DVDs from Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, "*Biblical Counseling Presentations*," with benefit.
 - d. **To help young people learn Scripture, have them teach it to others.** In our yearly summer camps we've gotten teens involved in building lesson plans from scratch, translating materials into Luxembourgish, and teaching it to younger children who come for an evangelistic Softball/Bible camp or discipleship-oriented Adventure Camp. This has been one of the most fruitful leadership training ministries we've had over the last 14 years.

3. **The Hands (practical experience in the how-tos of ministry)**

- a. **Show them how.** Most people are petrified about doing things in public. Most people don't think they can

minister; they suspect it's only if you have an MDiv or ThD behind your name that you can make a difference in another person's life. But if you show them how, being very specific, lots of people can do things very effectively in ministry. We go through a lot of the details of leading the worship service with a group of core men: how to read Scripture, how to choose hymns, how to use your hands, what to pray for. I don't lead worship unless no one else is available, so we work hard to help the men learn how to do the things that are often delegated to "professionals" in larger American churches.

- b. **Let them make mistakes.** Nothing's perfect. The world will not end if a person you're training says something wrong or makes an unwise choice. Be there to help him pick up the pieces and learn from a fault. That's how we all learn. Of course, if the potential mistake can be avoided by the training process, that's even better. And naturally if you anticipate an error that could threaten the whole mission, intervene by all means! Otherwise, don't be afraid of mistakes. They are a great teaching tool.
- c. **Integrate budding leaders into the decision-making process.** It's tempting to make decisions all by yourself as you administrate a church plant. But leaders need to be brought through the process of thinking through decisions biblically. We recently received a request from a British group to do theater in our morning service. I knew what I thought we should tell them, but I told the woman who made the request I would bring up the matter at our next Mentoring for Ministry meeting. I knew we would thrash through the issues involved: is the worship service for entertainment? If we start, where do we stop? If we keep people with what we attract them with, what will doing this once lead to later? The group travels all across Europe doing the same theater pieces in Catholic, Protestant and evangelical churches. What will be the doctrinal content of the skits, given this ecumenical approach? I knew the answer to these questions, but the men needed to work through them so that if they are asked later, they will have gone through the analysis process and can speak with one voice.
- d. **Teach men to preach.** A good place to start is with a short devotional, for example, at the beginning of the communion time. We've taught a class in homiletics to get men started in this process. There's lots more to ministry than preaching, of course, but our men need to grow the skills of exegeting the biblical text, being able to explain it simply and in an engaging way to someone else, and then apply it to life.

OUR SPECIAL CHALLENGES

Another paper would be required to analyze all the reasons why leadership in Europe does not grow quickly in many churches. We have noticed several factors over the years in Luxembourg:

- (1) the deadening influence of the welfare state on people's sense of personal responsibility and initiative;
- (2) missionaries' reticence to delegate;
- (3) young people's tendency to grow up slowly, not leaving the home until the late 20s or even mid-30s;
- (4) the time-consuming effort required for training people for leadership, often one at a time;
- (5) the paucity of leadership training materials in some local languages; and
- (6) the growing multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character of European churches, requiring the missionary to adapt leadership training to a group of increasingly heterogeneous people.

Conclusion

These difficulties notwithstanding, Jesus Christ and the apostles remain our biblical model for leadership training in the local church. Even in the changing scene in Europe leadership training and equipping is possible by the power of the Word of God and the indwelling Son of God by His Spirit. Knowing that keeps us going in this crucial element of church planting. Leadership training among the people of the emerging national churches is the most strategic thing we can do with our time to multiply the ministry.

Roeser, November 2009



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HOW TO DO A CHAPTER SUMMARY

PREPARE!

1. Pray

Ask God to guide your study; He is the author of the Bible and will explain the book to you. John 16.13-14; 1 Corinthians 2.12-14.

2. Choose

Select the chapter from God's Word which you wish to study. You will profit more by studying through a book, chapter by chapter, than by skipping around.

3. Read

Read through the chapter several times to get the "feel and the flow", or the basic teaching of the passage. Try using several trustworthy versions to help you understand the text (for example, the NIV study Bible or the Ryrie Study Bible-NASB/NKJV).

4. Draft

Prepare a rough draft of your chapter condensation using the work sheet on the following page. Follow the instructions below to make this draft.

STUDY!

1. Paragraph divisions

Divide the chapter into short units of thought, eight verses or less. These will not necessarily be paragraphs; sometimes one sentence will be enough. Note these divisions in the left-hand column.

2. Paragraph condensations

Using thirty words or less from the Bible text itself, summarize each paragraph. You do not have to use complete sentences. Identify the main people, things, action words and descriptive words in the paragraph; then link them together. Remember to use as many of the Bible's own words and as few of your own words as possible!

3. Paragraph titles

After you have finished the paragraph condensations, give each paragraph a simple title in three words or less. You may use your own words for this. The title should boil down further the content of each paragraph.

4. Chapter summary

Study through the chapter again, using your titles and condensations as a guide. Look for the flow of thought through the paragraphs. What is the basic teaching of the chapter? In thirty words or less, summarize the whole chapter at the bottom of the sheet. Use your own words.

5. Chapter title

Now in six words or less, boil down your chapter summary to a good title. Write this title at the top of the worksheet.

6. Key verse

Select a verse that best summarizes the theme of the chapter and memorize this verse. Write the reference at the bottom of the work sheet.

7. Final copy

You may want to make a neat copy of all this material for a notebook.

SHARE!

Now share the blessings and help you have received from God's Word with other needy people! Your summaries and titles will help you express more easily and clearly what you have learned. Remember that we must teach people to feed themselves on the Word of God. So teach someone else to do chapter summary!

Book name and chapter: _____

Chapter title (6): _____

(1) Paragraph divisions

(2) Paragraph condensations

(3) Paragraph titles

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(4) Chapter summary:

(5) Key Verse:
