

The Bible and the Training of Men

In the early church, there were no parachurch training programs such as Bible Colleges or Theological Seminaries. Yet, there seemed to be no lack of godly mature, biblically knowledgeable pastors and missionaries. Is there something, therefore, which we are missing when it comes to the training of men for ministry?

The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I will build My church..." (Matthew 16:18). The church is the focal point of God's redemptive plan in this age. At Antioch, Barnabas and Saul "met with the church, and taught considerable numbers" (Acts 11:26). The disciples were so well trained that they "were first called 'Christians' in Antioch." None of these men were told to go to Jerusalem and sit at the feet of the apostles for theological instruction. In fact, it was the apostles who sent Barnabas to Antioch. Those who were trained were to remain where they were; with the people whom they knew and to whom they would minister and receive training where they lived; in the local church where they served. Notice the list of teachers at Antioch as written in Acts 13:1. Paul makes this point to the Colossians about Epaphras in Colossians 4:12. Paul had not met the saints in Colossae (Colossians 2:1). But he says to Epaphras, "one of your number."

When the missionary team traveled and started a local church, the men were taught there (Acts 14:19-28; 18:1-11). Paul instructed Timothy in his first letter to remain in Ephesus where they had been training men (1 Timothy 1:3). This was for the purpose of training faithful men; men who would be "adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17). Consider the Lord Jesus Himself. When He chose the twelve, we read "that they might be *with Him*" (emphasis mine - Mark 3:14). Jesus also said, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

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Is it any wonder that a large number of men who go to a Bible College or Seminary want to become professors? What they see modeled before them is not the pastor or the missionary. Jesus wanted the men with Him to become like Him. The pattern we are given is to train faithful men who will train others to become like them (2 Timothy 2:2). How, then, can men become pastors and missionaries that God wants them to be if they are not taught by the same and with them for example and modeling the ministry which is being taught? Veteran pastors with decades of ministry experience have lamented that men who have come out of an institution of higher learning did not know how to present the Gospel in a witnessing

situation. They weren't able to defend the faith by "refuting those who contradict" (Titus 1:9) which is a requirement to be qualified as an elder/pastor. They lacked compassion for the people in the church where they served because it was their "job" and not a ministry to which God had called them.

Practical Advantages of local church training

What are the practical advantages to local church training of men for ministry?

1. There is no need to uproot their families (if married).
2. There is no need for them to quit their present job and find another.
3. Along with their theological training, they are involved in the local church where they will be serving afterwards. Even missionaries need this training since the heart of all mission work is church planting.
4. They can utilize the spiritual gift which God has given them in the context of the people who know them and their giftedness. This both enable the man to grow spiritually and the church as they work together to see this man become what God wants him to be.
5. Training comes at the side of men who model the ministry and set the example for pastoral or missionary service.
6. Technology allows for graduate level training by men skilled in the biblical languages so that any local church can utilize vast resources for the training of men.
7. If married, a man's wife and family can gradually adjust to the vocational role of the husband/father. This is superior to moving men and their families for training and then moving them again to a place where they might be serving without even knowing the people well. Such a system does not allow adequate time for the man and his family to really get to know the people.
8. A similar situation exists with the church. Without being with the body of believers, spiritual gifts are not recognized in the body and are not utilized in the body as God has intended them to be. This can be frustration for the church and its leadership.
9. The expense of this kind of training is greatly reduced for a man. This lessens the financial burden upon him and his family. Men can continue in their work and have the financial means to cover their educational costs.
10. Be remaining in the local church, a man can benefit from the fellowship of other local churches. A fellowship of churches benefits a man by exposing him to how his local church functions with other local churches.

A Practical Consideration

When such a local oriented program of pastoral/missionary training is launched, it is important that the local church pastor has adequate training and knows how to access resources in areas of training where he is not adequate. It is helpful to have experienced pastors/missionaries available, either in person or via DVD to supplement areas of instruction where a pastor might be deficient (as Timothy and Titus no doubt supplemented the efforts of pastors in Ephesus and Crete).

But the men and resources come to the local church setting rather than removing the men-in-training from their local setting. It may be profitable to periodically have collective efforts by several local church pastors or schools to provide specialized training. In other words, local churches near to each other could band together for the training of men and to share their resources. This can be done even if it is simply two local churches near to each other.

Moreover, churches which are just starting out can draw upon the experience of other pastors/churches which have been carrying on this type of training. Some retired pastors can be utilized as well to teach in churches where the pastor is in need of help.



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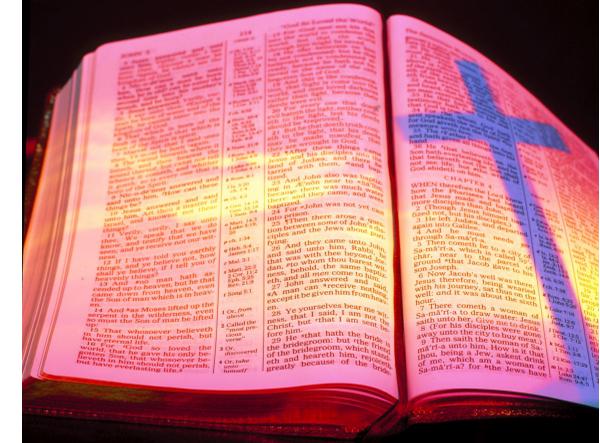
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The purpose of this brochure is not to demean Bible College or Seminaries faithful to the Word of God. Many of us are graduates of an accredited College and Theological Seminary. Rather, the purpose of this brochure is to look at what the Bible says. What do we find in the Word of God as to how men were trained for ministry?

You are invited to consider the following:

1. What does the Bible say about training men for ministry?
2. What are the practical advantages to local church training of men for ministry?