



Developing leaders while doing ministry – September 04

In Seminary, I often wondered if I would ever use all the information passed on by godly professors. Too many well-meaning people view the training of leaders as a purely classroom exercise where the task is to pour out a wealth of information. I often compare this approach to a dump truck full of information being dumped on me with the expectation of putting it all into practice.

This is the opposite of what Jesus did with the Twelve, or what Paul did in training Timothy. One of Jesus' last commands was to ... *go and make disciple of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). This phrase in the Greek is best translated, "As you go make disciples." The idea is to be training disciples as we live out our faith in front of them, walking through our daily routines (sounds a lot like Deuteronomy 6, doesn't it?).

Transfer the idea to training leaders: "As you are doing your ministry, make disciples/leaders." The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy of this when he wrote, *and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others* (2Timothy 2:2).

How did Timothy learn? By being with Paul as a companion, co-worker, and fellow laborer. He was with Paul, with few exceptions, from Acts 16:1 until Paul's arrest in Acts 21. During these years of travel, Timothy learned how to preach, deal with conflict, defend the faith, deal with an angry mob, encourage and disciple new believers, and train local leaders who would lead the new church plants. He also watched Paul raise the dead (Eutychus, Acts 20:7-12) through the power of Christ. Everything Timothy learned about ministry he learned in these early years with Paul, as Paul went about making disciples.

We can't train leaders in the classroom alone – we must get them involved with us (or someone else) while we are in the process of doing ministry. Keep future leaders at your side. Show them ministry and allow them to be stretched. Paul mentored and coached Timothy eventually 'passing him the baton' to repeat the process in the lives of others. As pastors and lay leaders, we need to continually pour ourselves into future leaders of our ABF classes and our churches. We do this best with a combination of classroom teaching and hands-on learning as they watch and participate in ministry. Remember, leaders are not born they are made. Don't miss out on training leaders while you do ministry. Here are some practical ways to train leaders while doing ministry:

1. Identify Potential Leaders by their faithfulness and maturity.
2. Identify their spiritual gifts, talents and abilities.
3. Match the responsibility to their strengths.
4. Ask them to assist you in ministry areas to which they are suited (class leader, class teacher, Care Ministry, Small group Leader) and train them by showing them how to and then gradually giving them responsibility.
5. Plan a lesson or series together
6. Involve them in planning activities or direction for the class
7. Take potential shepherds with you on a shepherding or hospital visit
8. Show potential leaders how you come up with ideas or how to accomplish various ministry tasks by involving them in the planning
9. Get involved in their life and involve them in yours.
10. Never do ministry alone whenever you can include a potential leader(s).

11. Do a study or read a leadership book together
12. Meet weekly for lunch to talk about life and ministry experiences.
13. Allow them to follow you on a Sunday (or your time of ministry) as they watch you do ministry
14. Coach them as you release them to leadership and ministry
15. Pray with them and for them as you care for them as your own spiritual children.

If we are not involved in training leaders we are in essence bankrupting the next generation of believers. Who are we training to take our places and what is the best way to do that? Let me encourage you to train leaders as you do your ministry.

Jeff Scott, Pastor of Adult Ministries at Heritage Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA