

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LEADERSHIP TRAINING?

J.J. Turner

As I travel around the brotherhood I am asked more and more frequently, “Whatever happened to leadership training?” This question is relevant in light of the decline of leadership in the church; especially the training and equipping of men to serve as elders and deacons. I recently came across these phrases by an unknown author:

“When the ship is sinking, it not the time to train the crew in abandon ship drills.”

“When the last inning is played, it’s not time to call for a pinch hitter.”

“When the sheep have been scattered, lost their way, or eaten by wolves, it is not time to ask for volunteers to be shepherds.”

The best time to take out fire insurance is before there is a fire. The best time to learn how to swim is before you are going down for the third or last time. The best time to train competent leaders is before there is a crisis. Most congregations are in their present state because it is where past leadership decisions and actions have brought them. Where the church will be tomorrow and years from now depends on leadership training, decisions and actions of today.

Why Aren’t We Training Leaders?

Back to the question: Whatever happened to leadership training? Here are some of my answers to this vital question:

1. Some congregations have never engaged in a regular, curriculum based, and advanced training for all levels of church leadership.

2. Some congregations have failed, for whatever reason, to see the need for the ongoing training of leaders. They seem to be blinded to this need.

3. Some have given up the training of leaders because it didn’t accomplish what they thought it should accomplish.

4. Some gave up training future leaders because they didn’t have an “expert” or competent person to do the training.

5. Some congregational leaders don’t want to admit that they have a need for additional training. Some don’t want their own weaknesses to be exposed.

6. Some haven’t had a leadership training program for years because they are not aware of the outstanding materials, workshops and lectureship being conducted in this field.

7. Some, sadly, have shifted from the biblical emphasis of church organization and leadership to a “majority” rule approach.

Congregational Leadership School

Training leaders in the local church is a needed work. Pursuing a leadership role in the church is also an honorable desire. It is not by accident that the first qualification of an elder is “desire” (1 Timothy 3:1).

Desire is not limited to elders. All church leadership must stem from a desire to follow Christ. This attitude is one of humility (Philippians 2:4-9). It takes time to develop leaders. The Hebrews’ writer affirmed that “by reason of time one becomes a teacher” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

The local congregation should be an ongoing leadership training school. This school equips all members for ministry (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16). It trains members in how to be “workers with God” (2 Corinthians 6:1, 2). This leadership school equips leaders to pursue the eternal mission given by God to the church (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; Mark 16:15, 16). This school is committed to bringing glory to God through the church (Ephesians 3:21). This leadership school will commit the work of the church to faithful men who shall in turn pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:1-3).

Basic Curriculum for Leadership School

Imagine the curriculum for a congregational leadership training school as a stool with three legs. Each leg represents a major subject that is essential to properly and biblically training leaders in the church. These three legs are: (1) knowledge, (2) character, and (3) skill. Let’s take a brief look at each subject:

KNOWLEDGE is essential in the leader’s preparation. He must first know God’s word. The Bible is his guide and safe manual for leading himself and others. Knowledge of basic people differences and needs will help a leader do

his work more effectively. Successful leaders must know the times and challenges in which they are leading. This means that the congregational leadership school will have a curriculum that teaches the basic subjects leaders need to know.

CHARACTER is the heart and soul of a leader. A leader may have knowledge and many other things but without character he will not be effective as a leader. Sadly, some leaders are “characters” instead of having character. The Bible has numerous character traits that will equip the leaders in this needs area. The traits of love in 1 Corinthians 13; the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-26; the thinking agenda of Philippians 4:6-9; and of course the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-13). Character is displayed in behavior and is molded through behavior disciplines.

SKILL is needed for a leader to use his knowledge and character properly in leading God’s people. Many times a man is given a leadership role he does not possess the skill to perform. Some are assigned leadership roles, not because they have the skill, but because it will “help him be faithful.” This is putting the cart before the horse. Jesus spent approximately three-and-a-half years in training his Apostles for the leadership roles they would later perform in the church. The Holy Spirit came and continued their training. We must not ask a leader to perform something he does not

have the skill to do. The church is an equipping school.

Think of the three legged stool model. Imagine a stool with only one strong leg, say for example a leader has good knowledge but is weak in character and skills. Perhaps he is strong in character but lacks in knowledge and skills. Maybe he is the “Jack of all trades” skills wise but is lacking in knowledge and character. The challenge of the congregational leadership school is to equip each leader in all three areas. This takes planning, time and dedicated effort in an ongoing school of leadership.

Whatever happened to leadership training in your congregation?

A SEMINAR FOR THESE TIMES

Dr. J.J. Turner, the author of 25 books on leadership has developed a dynamic, live and results producing leadership seminar. His *Leadership Enrichment Seminar* is designed to help a congregation lay a foundation for equipping leaders in (1) knowledge, (2) character, and (3) skills. The three major keys to effective leadership.

For scheduling and information contact

J.J. Turner
jeremiahinst@aol.com
678-2961448

A QUESTION FOR OUR TIMES



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Preparing Tomorrow’s Leaders Today