



MENTORSHIP

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

Believers gather together as churches for a variety of biblical reasons. One of these is to provide a forum of relationships for pastors to equip believers to do gospel ministry effectively.

For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... (Ephesians 4:12)

The word *equip* means “to furnish completely, to prepare for something, to train someone so that they are fully qualified.”

Though God expects pastors to provide ministry training for all church members, he expects them to give increased attention to those who demonstrate leadership potential.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Key Question: How can you discern which men in a church demonstrate leadership potential?

Not every man in a congregation will develop into a leader, but some must rise to this level. Without reliable men to lead, a church will sputter rather than succeed. For this reason, every church needs some trustworthy men who are able to train more such men, capable of training others.

This six-part Bible study provides a basic framework and biblical strategy for pastors and other key church leaders to follow in training new leaders. It draws on principles we observe in the ministry of Paul the apostle, as he trained men like Timothy, Titus and others. We will also observe parallels to how Jesus trained the twelve disciples.

Key Question: What is Christian leadership?

Diagnostic Questions

1. How is each part of this definition important?
2. Which part of this definition distinguishes Christian leadership from secular?
3. Are you exercising Christian leadership in your church? If so, how?

Lesson 1: Identify Potential

Opening Question: How can a church transition men from functioning members to active leaders?

To train leaders for the church, current leaders must identify men with leadership potential. Paul did this with Timothy and others.

Key Insight: Look for personal character and leadership ability in others.

A handful of churches sprouted from Paul's first missionary trip into Asia Minor. At the beginning of his second trip, he revisited these churches to confirm that they were functioning biblically. At one of them, in Lystra, he met a man named Timothy.

He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him. (Acts 16:2-3; cf. 2 Timothy 1:5)

This man had a stellar reputation among the local believers. And though he was a younger man, they respected his character. Having observed this, Paul recruited him to join the ministry team.

Paul himself was the beneficiary of this approach, for his mentor, Barnabas, had recruited him when no one else would.

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. (Acts 9:26-27)

This pattern appears throughout the New Testament, and not only in Paul's ministry. We should follow this same approach today. Yes, we should do what we can to teach every believer to be an obedient disciple of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 4:12). But as we do so, we must learn to identify those who exhibit exceptional character and leadership qualities.

While this simplified list, and similar lists by other popular authors, may be helpful, it is not essentially biblical. Instead, I recommend a survey of leadership qualities required for pastors and deacons: Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, and Titus 1:6-9. Another approach may be to consider the exemplary Christian qualities outlined in 1 Timothy 4:12.

As you discover men in the church with the character and the reputation of a potential leader, take the active step of recruiting them to follow you. Jesus selected his twelve disciples. Barnabas recruited Paul. Paul recruited Timothy, and so on. Don't wait for potential leaders to approach you. Take the first step and approach them instead.

Diagnostic Questions

1. Name one man in your church (or several), whether a teenager or adult, who exhibits exceptional leadership qualities.

2. Apart from the regular church ministries, like Lord's Day worship, Sunday School, and special events, is anyone giving him (or them) with focused leadership training?
3. What hinders you or your church from identifying men as potential leaders?
4. Is it possible to misidentify potential leaders? How so?

Lesson 2: Spend Quality Time

Opening Question: What is the best format or environment for training new leaders?

To train leaders for the church, current leaders must spend meaningful time with those who exhibit leadership potential. Paul did this with Timothy.

Key Insight: Spend quality time with potential leaders, especially by including them in your ministry activities.

No methods or materials or electronic media equals the impact of being together, doing the work of ministry together with the people you are mentoring. You can give them a book, enroll them in a class, or share some videos with them. But nothing can replace the power of spending quality time with them in person, in life and in ministry.

Notice Christ's first purpose in choosing his disciples. It was not to send them out to preach. It was to spend time with them. Read carefully, or you might miss it.

He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. (Mark 3:14)

Did Jesus send them out to preach? Yes. But first and foremost, he spent time with them. He walked with them, ate with them, taught with them, untangled their failures, answered their questions and lodged with them.

Paul followed the same approach. He spent time with those he mentored. He did this by bringing them alongside of him as he traveled and ministered (Acts 16:3, 6-12; 20:1-5, 18-20; Phil. 2:22; Col. 1:1).

This parallels the kind of learning that Moses prescribed to parents for training godly children, talking and explaining things along the way.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (Deuteronomy 6:7).

This approach to child training transfers to church leadership training as well. Jesus did this with his disciples. So, did Moses and Joshua, and so did Elijah and Elisha. In this way, Paul provided Timothy and other developing church leaders with an opportunity to learn in the classroom of "real-world experience," observing Paul's manner and methods firsthand, in real scenarios rather than theoretical classroom presentations.

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance. (2 Timothy 3:10)

Timothy did not just hear Paul explain the way he ministered and led churches, sitting in a classroom, reading through a set of course notes or a textbook on the subject, and taking a paper exam. He witnessed firsthand the way that Paul lived and ministered for

Christ, discussing what he observed with Paul along the way, traveling from city to city, and from house to house (Acts 20:20).

This sort of apprentice-type, hands-on ministry requires setting aside regular time for the purpose of spending quality time with potential leaders. Include them in your hospital visits, sermon preparation, evangelism efforts, and time at home with family. Include them in everything possible, providing them with a firsthand awareness of life as a leader. Provide them with a variety of experiences. Explain why you said and did certain things and ask them questions about what they observed.

Preparing leaders this way ensures that they will receive a more honest, authentic, and complete understanding of the challenges of church ministry and how to handle them.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What are the benefits of bringing along leaders-in-training when you carry out various church leadership responsibilities?
2. List a variety of church leadership scenarios in which you could bring a potential leader along to observe you.
3. What is the value of explaining some things to your trainee before the ministry event takes place?
4. What kind of questions can you ask your trainee after the ministry event has taken place?
5. What challenges prevent us from bringing along potential leaders with us when we carry out leadership duties?

Lesson 3: Provide an Example

Opening Question: What does it mean to be an example?

Training new church leaders requires that current leaders model good leadership qualities. Paul provided such an example for Timothy.

Key Insight: Provide leaders-in-training with an exemplary pattern to follow.

“Do as I say and not as I do.” This instruction will produce neither godly nor effective church leaders, because those who follow will inevitably follow what they saw over what they heard.

Thankfully, Paul followed a higher road, urging those he trained to “do as I say *and* as I do” (Phil. 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1).

He first provided a pattern of wholesome speech. So, what you say does matter.

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13)

The word *pattern* is another word for *example*. It speaks of an outline or a sketch which you would trace and duplicate. As you train new leaders, you need to provide them with more than instructions from your mouth. You need to provide them with a living demonstration of how to talk, when to talk, and what to say as a Christian leader.

But Paul’s example extended beyond his words. He also provided a pattern of exemplary behavior.

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (Philippians 3:17)

Ultimately, the pattern of behavior for every future church leaders is Jesus Christ himself. Leaders-in-training need to be reminded of this. That’s why Paul urged people to follow him, as a leader and apostle, but only to the degree that he followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). This awareness of Christ as supreme leader is crucial. There is no place for egocentric, dictatorial leaders in Christ’s church (1 Pet. 5:3).

When a leader provides a wholesome example, he is able urge those he has trained to do the same for others, in speech, in conduct and in inner heart attitude (Tit. 2:7).

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example [pattern] to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

To illustrate how Paul included potential leaders, like Timothy, in his ministry activities and provided them with a real-life example of Christlike leadership, look at the way that he taught Timothy to practice selflessness. This happened immediately after Timothy joined Paul in ministry.

He took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region. (Acts 16:3)

By leading Timothy to be circumcised, he taught him firsthand, by example, how to yield personal rights for the benefit of others and the testimony of the gospel. This was not a one-time lesson, for Paul consistently modeled this leadership principle throughout his ministry (Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Cor. 8:13; 11:32-33).

Diagnostic Questions

1. What Christian leaders whom you have spent time with have provided you with an exemplary pattern of Christlike behavior in word and behavior?
2. In what ways have Christian leaders provided you with a poor example?
3. Could your speech and behavior provide a commendable pattern for potential leaders to follow?
4. In what ways do you find it challenging to be an example?
5. What can you do to strengthen your weaknesses as an example?

Lesson 4: Uphold Scripture

Opening Question: In what ways does your life reveal that Scripture is your guide?

To train faithful church leaders, you must instill a total allegiance to the authority of Scripture. Paul emphasized this in his training approach.

Key Insight: Impress upon rising leaders a total allegiance to the authority of Scripture.

Church leadership requires a commitment to conscientious study (1 Tim. 4:6, 13). But study of what? The *Wall Street Journal*? British literature? The *Psychology Review*?

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

Church leaders must develop a deep, personal commitment to studying and obeying the Word of God. Paul himself modeled this commitment to rigorous study, even under duress (2 Tim. 4:13).

Why is this important? Because it safeguards leaders from capitulating to empty human traditions and to ever-changing “winds of doctrine.” (Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8). Furthermore, it prevents a leader from faltering (Ps. 119:165). And it averts insecurity, establishing a confidence in God regardless of peer pressure (Prov. 29:25).

To instill this conviction, leaders must uphold the sufficiency of Scripture, as Paul did for Timothy. The Bible is both the manual and message for Christian ministry. We should allow nothing else to supersede it.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2)

To transfer this commitment, leaders must encourage those they train to provide biblical evidence that that they are teaching and doing is indeed biblical. In fact, leaders should be able to do this themselves. “Because I said so” is not a good approach. The right approach is “because the Bible tells me so.”

Consider the example of how the Thessalonian believers responded to Paul’s leadership.

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

These believers demonstrate two essential qualities to impart to new leaders: 1) an eager appetite for Bible truth and 2) a diligent evaluation of what they learn against Bible truth. Here Luke uses this example to reveal that it was appropriate to fact-check even the Apostle Paul, to ensure that he was loyal to Scripture.

Ultimately, a leader must demonstrate that loyalty to Scripture through 1) spending daily personal time in prayerful Bible study, 2) articulating orthodox doctrinal beliefs, and 3) following ministry practices that are biblical.

Diagnostic Questions

1. What influences or factors compete with the Bible for allegiance?
2. How can you train a future leader to spend daily time in the Word?
3. How can you guide a future leader to articulate orthodox doctrinal beliefs?
4. How can you enable a future leader to follow biblical ministry practices?

Lesson 5: Entrust Responsibility

Opening Question: When did a Christian leader entrust you with an important church responsibility? How did it turn out?

Church leadership training requires delegation, the choice to hand over ministry responsibilities to the leaders-in-training. Paul did this for Timothy and others.

Key Insight: Assign important responsibilities to the leaders you are developing.

Leadership training works both ways. It develops increased capabilities in those you are training. But it also develops increased trust from those who are providing the training. Somewhere along this continuum of increased ability and increased trust lie strategic opportunities to assign ministry tasks to the trainee. It is at these junctures that leadership mettle is tested.

Paul realized this dynamic and delegated ministry responsibilities to Timothy, whether minor or major, mundane or difficult (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:10; Phil. 2:19-23; 1 Thess. 3:2, 1-2; 2 Tim. 4:9-13).

Consider the first time he did this for Timothy. It happened when persecution forced Paul out of Thessalonica, leaving Timothy with leadership responsibility in his absence.

Immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. (Acts 17:14)

In a subsequent ministry venture, Paul deliberately assigned Timothy to embark on a ministry journey without him, in his place.

He sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. (Acts 19:22)

By analyzing these two examples, you will discover a strategic process. First, notice that Paul delegated leadership to Silas and Timothy as a pair, with Timothy answering to Silas (he is named second, after Silas, the more seasoned leader). In the next occasion, Paul also delegated leadership to two men, Timothy and Erastus. But this time Timothy appears to have earned a greater measure of trust, serving as leader over Erastus (he is named first, before Erastus).

You should also notice that Paul instructed Silas and Timothy to return to him after a period of time.

Those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed. (Acts 17:15)

Properly understood, especially early in the training process, effective delegation is not open-ended. It provides a forum for follow-up and accountability throughout the assignment, and especially after the assignment is complete. Jesus followed the same approach with his disciples (Lk. 9:1-10).

Diagnostic Questions

1. Why might church leaders hesitate to delegate leadership responsibilities to potential leaders?
2. How can church leaders use delegation improperly or ineffectively?
3. What kind of church leadership assignments could an active leader delegate to a leader-in-training?
4. What are some practical ways that a church leader can assess and improve the leadership qualities of a future leader through assignments like this?

Lesson 6: Give Affirmation

Opening Question: Do you recall a moment in your ministry and leadership when a leader spoke words that encouraged and confirmed what you were doing? How did God use those words in your life?

Effective leadership trainers understand the positive effect of affirming words. Paul himself verbally acknowledged the progress he observed in Timothy's life.

Key Insight: Verbally acknowledge the progress you observe in those you are training.

It is good for a father to say to his son, "You need to learn how to work hard, so I want you to take out the trash." But after time and practice, when his son learns to work hard by diligently taking out the trash, it is important for the father to say, "Son, you have learned how to work hard. I know this because I see how faithful you are at taking out the trash now." Do you agree?

Paul employed words of affirmation like this as he trained Timothy to be a leader. He did this in two ways, and so should those who train church leaders today.

First, he spoke words of affirmation to Timothy directly. This encouraged Timothy's confidence to press forward on the leadership pathway.

Timothy, a true son in the faith. (1 Timothy 1:2)

In this instance, he encouraged Timothy by affirming his fatherly affection and appreciation for him. Words like this communicate stability and foster confidence to make difficult choices. They also prepare a leader-in-training to receive some challenging instructions.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. (1 Timothy 4:14)

Here Paul affirms that God himself had called Timothy to a church leadership role. Furthermore, other church leaders had also recognized God's hand upon his life. Words like this counteract doubts that may afflict him and motivates him to press on to new degrees of difficulty and challenge.

Additionally, Paul spoke words of affirmation for Timothy to others in the church. This approach provided an additional layer of encouragement for Timothy, revealing that Paul was so confident of his leadership preparedness that he was willing to say so in a public manner.

You know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. (Philippians 2:20-22)

On this occasion, he affirms as an eyewitness his belief that Timothy had passed rigorous tests of ministry leadership with flying colors. Paul did not hesitate to associate himself with Timothy.

*Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ.
(1 Thessalonians 3:2)*

On this occasion, to another church, he affirms that Timothy is an equal partner and leader in gospel ministry.

As you train potential church leaders, learn to recognize when they have earned your trust in key ways and reached significant milestones. You can do this by increasing their load of responsibility; but you should also find ways to express your appreciation for their contributions and progress. Words like this inspire greater excellence and deeper commitment (2 Tim. 1:7-8; 2:1-4).

Be careful not to say things that you don't really mean, or that are not genuinely true. Flattery has no place in leadership training. But also, be careful not to speed past progress and accomplishments without pausing to say, "You are doing well. I trust you. I can see God working in your life."

Diagnostic Questions

1. Why might some leaders hesitate to give words of affirmation to the future leaders they are training?
2. What sort of personal progress and ministry milestones deserve to be acknowledged in training new leaders?
3. What are some different ways that you can share your words of affirmation for these things?
4. When is it important to provide personal affirmation?
5. When is it important to provide public affirmation?

Conclusion

As a Christian leader in your church, you have a responsibility to train future leaders. To accomplish this, you must:

1. Identify potential leaders
2. Spend quality time with them
3. Provide them with a Christlike example
4. Uphold total allegiance to Scripture
5. Entrust leadership responsibilities to them
6. Give words of affirmation along the way

But undergirding all of these things must be a personal commitment to faithful, fervent intercessory prayer. Paul understood this. Notice what he says to Timothy about his prayers for him.

I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day. (2 Timothy 1:3)

Paul prayed for Timothy. But he not only prayed, he prayed continually, night and day. His prayers for Timothy were not relegated to occasional scheduled moments. They happened multiple times throughout the day, as Timothy came to mind.

Jesus Christ also acknowledged this necessity (Lk. 6:12; 22:32; Jn. 17:6-19). In fact, he not only prayed *for* the men he trained as church leaders, he prayed *with* them (Lk. 11:1-13; 22:39-46).

So, as you follow the principles of leadership training modeled by Paul, be sure to uphold in prayer those whom you are training, as Paul also did. Pray for them weekly for sure, but perhaps daily is a more appropriate practice. By doing so, you will discover that training faithful leaders for the church flourishes only when leaders pray faithfully for those they are training. Only then will the strategy that Paul followed flourish.

Diagnostic Questions

1. How frequently do you pray for those you are training to be leaders?
2. What can you do to ensure that you pray as Paul did?
3. How can you instill the same commitment to prayer in those you are training?