

Seminars on Training & Discipleship Pt 2

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Well, the second session is particularly focused on developing the next generation of church leaders. Really, training people, developing our people. And the importance of godly and effective leaders is critical. The spiritual life and progress of our church depends largely upon the quality of its leaders and it takes time to grow leaders in opportunity, experience. It doesn't happen over night. It is a long term strategy to develop quality leadership within our churches. But also the witness of the church depends very much on the way in which the church as a whole is developed, to be able to share the faith, to give a reason for the hope that is within us. A church that is developed, a church that is keen to learn and to grow and motivated by prayer and the knowledge of God will be better equipped to share the gospel, to gossip the gospel with neighbors and friends and colleagues at work. So at all levels, from the leadership right the way through the whole spread of the congregation a growing church, a developing church will be better able to lead and to share the gospel and live the gospel in the communities where we are.

So the importance of godly leadership. So much depends in the life of a church upon the quality, the caliber of the leadership.

[?] a team of leaders needs to be constantly self critical. It needs to be spiritually alert to the changing needs within the church. A church isn't static. It is a living organism. It is moving. It is living, alert to fresh gospel opportunities in the community. Communities change. Doors open. Doors close. Leaders need to be asking: Are we keeping ahead of the game? Are we leading the church to grasp fresh opportunities and challenges as they arise?

Leadership today in churches, particularly eldership are often two full, actually, for the needs of the church and sometimes not representative of the congregation.

I would like to put a scenario before you. It may not be particularly applicable to this church, but there are lessons there, perhaps, that you can apply. You see, years ago most churches in the old denominations, most churches had a minister and a large deaconate, often 10 or a dozen men within the deaconate, sometimes men and women in the denominations. And within that deaconate would be a spread of gifts, a spread of experience, a spreads of relationship with all the congregation.

Today very often there is a small leadership, just two or three can virtually have responsibility for the whole church. They may not be able to interact closely with all the congregation to get a wider perspective. Not always interacting as well close as they should with the deacons as well. And therefore a small eldership, a small leadership may lack fresh input, fresh stimulation, fresh challenge. And then leaders [?] like the rest of us get older and they may not see the urgent need to develop younger men. And the reason we are meeting today is because the leaders here have seen the need to develop younger people. And thank God they have, that this doesn't always happen in churches, but they are very conscious that the leadership of the church really is too small for the size of the church. And that is partly the division that has been put before you as a church.

But also with a small leadership and particularly as leaders get older they can lose understanding of the fast changing secular world and how to reach that world with the gospel and meanwhile the church can become increasingly frustrated and deprived of fresh stimulation and spiritual dynamism. So the church then becomes distanced from the perishing world around and not engaging with the world and the culture as we need to be.

So developing future leaders is absolutely critical for the future vision and ministry of the church.

Friends, reformed churches like ours in particular have been poor, very poor at proactively mentoring and developing leaders compared, say, with the Reformed Anglicans, the Pentecostals, Charismatics. My brother-in-law is the minister of a large Pentecostal, [?] Pentecostal Church. I was talking to him a while ago and he said, "Well..." They have elders. I am not sure how many. He said, "Between us we are mentoring one to one regular time one to one, we are mentoring 18 young men for leadership." And he was mentoring a small number mostly spread through the eldership, but mentoring 18 young men for future leadership. That would be typical of that kind of church investing in the future.

That is why the Bible college, the big [?] Bible college is overflowing. It is always over subscribed. They have got more men coming to the ministry than they know what to do with. Youth leaders. He said about 50 trained youth leaders have been through Bible college. Degrees, [?] and so on, Bible college trained, 50 churches can't use them. We have got too many trained men.

[?] last year folks in our circles saying... complained about too many ministers. They don't know what to do with them. And, by the way, they are church planting. He said to me, "Most of these men coming out of the college won't... they won't be able to have their churches until they are about.... have or lead a church until they are about 50 years of age. They will have to be assistants, associates. There won't be churches available for them and they are church planting massively. They have got so many men coming into the ministry and into youth leadership in specialized ministries. They are investing in their people. They are developing their people.

I don't see this happening in reformed circles. We have not been good at developing our people. And the Anglicans, of course, are the same, aren't they, very much so, the Reformed Anglicans, I mean. So we have been... rather many of our churches have just waited hoping that eventually new leaders will emerge in the congregation. Somehow they will emerge. They will appear or worse, hoping that suitable leaders will move into the area and join our church.

This situation where nobody is being specifically developed. Can I put it this way? Men with natural leadership gifts are more likely to come to the attention of the leaders and the church. Usually professional men who stand out, confident men with experience of leadership, decision making at work. They may or may not be the best equipped spiritually to lead a church, but as the most naturally gifted, they stand out. They are brought into leadership. Well, they have got gifts, obviously. They look like leaders. And if all the leaders are similar, professional, well educated men, the team can be unbalanced because it reflects, perhaps, only a part of the congregation and overlooks spiritually mature people whose potential is never developed because they are lower profile in the church. They don't stand out.

So this raises a fundamental question. What are actually the qualifications for leadership, elders and deacons? And what kind of men should we be looking for? Well, friends, in Scripture the qualification is almost entirely character and not gifting. I haven't time this morning because we are fairly squeezed for time, but if you look at 1 Timothy three and Titus one I would encourage you to do that when you get home. You will see the qualifications for elders and deacons is almost entirely—there is a long list of them—it is character. It is not gifting. That is not to say that God doesn't use gifts, but character is the thing that stands out. And often those who emerge as effective leaders were at first self effacing and full of doubt like Moses. You remember Moses. He thought he couldn't speak and he needed Aaron to speak for him.

Timothy was timid and needed a lot of encouragement from Paul, didn't he? Even the great apostle cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Of course God uses leadership gifts and thank God for gifted professional men. But true godly character is the first essential qualification in the Scripture. We know also that the character of a potential leader's wife must also be considered, 1 Timothy 3:11. Character, again, is spelled out of the wife and an unsuitable wife may disqualify her husband from leadership. So the qualification we are looking for is potential not full maturity, potential.

Churches often expect potential leaders to be as mature, as experienced as existing leaders who have been doing the job for 30 years. And if the church can't find men of that maturity they don't appoint anybody and that is what happens in a lot of our churches. The existing leaders get older and still no younger men are brought in because they aren't as mature as the existing leaders. Churches forget that those established leaders, those experienced leaders began as much younger men, inexperienced men who

have grown in stature over many years and, by the way, have made a lot of mistakes along the way and that is how they have learned.

Friends, if you look to bring new men into the leadership who are as mature as the leaders you have got now, you will wait for a long time. But they were novices when they started. They had made lots of mistakes along the way.

So new leaders should be men of godly character who have the potential to grow in spiritual wisdom and stature, but aren't necessarily the finished article. Preferably churches need men of different ages, I would suggest, different backgrounds, different life experiences in leadership so that the leadership reflects the whole church. As mentioned, many reformed churches are led by just professional men, are geared towards stable middle class people and the preaching can be—I am not saying it is here, I am sure it isn't—but in many of our churches it is mainly cerebral. It is mainly to the mind. Many reformed churches are in danger of losing contact with ordinary working people and with dysfunctional families. Indeed, they struggle to know how to evangelize and disciple working and dysfunctional people. So a greater variety of leaders can help the church to engage with and evangelize a breadth of people in the real world.

That is a point I could emphasize. I haven't got time, but it is a big point. Most of our churches tend to attract bookish, educated people, often because the leaders are all of one kind and the church isn't really engaging with the real world out there.

I know this is more professional area than say where I am in Yorkshire, but there is still something here that, I am sure, can apply.

Certainly new leaders must be godly. They must be humble. They must be teachable team players. There is [?] from the gospel and the well being of the flock. Not yes men, not clones of the present leaders, but those who will bring some freshness and some stimulation. But they must be free from personal ambition or a desire to push their own agendas. And they must commit to be part of a united team which can lead the whole church in spiritual unity. Absolutely vital.

My on church [?] the ministers and the elders we put ourselves into subjection to each other so that no one could be a maverick, no one could press out on their own and cause division and the understanding was that when you came into leadership you were part of a team and if you found yourself out pushing your agenda, you would step down. You would not divide the church. You would step down rather than cause division in the church. That was a very clear understanding. We put ourselves in subjection to each other and by that we kept a united leadership and a united church by God's grace.

So present leaders must face their God given responsibility to develop and to train up future leaders. But first the Lord holds leaders responsible to develop and mature all the people, Colossians 1:28.

“We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone, the whole congregation, mature in Christ.”

Everyone.

Ephesians four.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for the work of service so that the body, the whole body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity of the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, all of us, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

We must try and create a culture of investing in our people for the future, all our people. That is a New Testament church, a, cultural mindset of growing, training, developing, mentoring and delegating so that this culture pervades the church and the leaders always have this mindset.

This probably requires serious commitment to the firm resolve, the ability to move out of our safe comfort zone and embrace some radical change which is, perhaps, what you are going to have to face if you are going to take seriously the way the church is trying to lead you at the moment.

Because I travel a lot now as an itinerant minister I often listen to the bottom line, Evan Davis. Do you know the business man’s program? And what I picked up in that is that young job applicants, young people that are applying for jobs, professional careers will often say in interview, even though they are desperate to get a job in these days, they still say, “If I join your company how will... what plans will you have to develop me for my future career? How are you going to progress me? How are you going to grow me? How are you going to develop me if I join your company? I want to know.”

Friend, it think we should let young people now coming into our churches, we should expect them to be saying something similar. If I join... if I commit to your church, I don’t want to be a pew ornament. If I commit to membership in your church what plans will you have to develop me into the service of Christ that I may be the best that I can be for him? We should expect young people to be asking those questions.

The potential, realizing the potential of the whole church.

leaders can occasionally, I think, meet without an agenda. Just look at the spread of work and the workers in the church and ask the fundamental questions. Do essential people have understudies in training to replace them? Sunday school teachers. Youth leaders. Maybe some in the deaconate roles. Are they actually... have they got an under? Are they training somebody else? Absolutely vital where possible. Are they mentoring? Are they developing replacements? They may need encouragement to do this. Are there people with potential who have been overlooked, not been developed into service? How could

we help them? What more can we do to develop on those whose latent talents have not yet been discovered? Are we overlooking those whose work patterns make it difficult for them to attend midweek spiritual meetings?

I mentioned just now prayer meetings, Bible studies, house groups. Are we almost dismissing them as unspiritual and uncommitted and not worth investing time in even loading them with guilt when they genuinely cannot be involved? Friends, they have still got to be developed for the Lord.

Today many not only work horrendous hours as we see, but the massive pressures are there. So the question, as I said earlier, be more flexible to make sure that everyone can be involved in the spiritual... at least some aspect of the spiritual life of the church midweek as well as on the Lord's Day.

So leaders are responsible to try and develop the potential in every believer and need to create a culture, a mindset.

Well, this is quite naturally happening throughout the church.

And then we leaders must focus on developing each group within the church, I would suggest. Very quickly I am going to touch on different groups. First of all, leaders must focus on developing the women of the church. Women are usually the largest group in the church and the work horses behind the scenes. So often the women are the cement which holds the church together.

My wife Christine always says, "If the women in the church are happy, the church will be happy." Is that true here? If you unpack that, you will realize why. The influence that women have on their husbands, you know, husbands that get all worked up, we men, don't we? We get all worked up and you go home. Your wife says, "Calm down, dear," and puts it all into biblical context and prays it through, the husband will be happy. If she enflames the situation, "Oh, you are right. Absolute. Did you tell him?" That is all you need from a wife and you have got trouble in the church. You have got a bonfire. If the women in the church are happy, the church will be happy. She is right. Absolutely right.

And yet women are often under valued, not consulted, excluded from decisions making even decisions which directly affect them. Our women are a huge a precious resource both to be cherished and to be developed for the Lord. Preachers need to remember this in their sermon preparation.

Again, quoting my wife. She feels that much modern preaching is too masculine, information for the mind, more like a lecture with a little illustration or application to warm the heart, to feed the soul or to motivate the will. She says women need some feeling, some passion and some practical application. So do we men every but as much. God save us from lecturing in our pulpits. We need preachers, not lecturing.

If we invest in our women some can be trained for, yes, children work and youth work. Some can be trained for child protection. A lot of women in our churches are very helpful teachers and so on, can be excellent work of child protection. Women can be trained for running parenting classes among the unsaved. We had an excellent woman ran a wonderful parenting class with the moms of [?] group and a preschool play group and moms who went through that parenting class then went through [?]. Great ministry there to develop women into doing parenting classes.

And then, of course, women can be trained to run [?] which can be run in the home or can be run on church premises. Women can do a great work [?] in the neighborhood, a small group in the home, running [?], but need encouragement to do this and some training, basic training to do it.

Women have a great gift of ministry among the sick and elderly, the dying and bereaved. [?] great for a church to have a trained woman worker who can give a need in all of this, but many churches, of course, couldn't, perhaps, manage that.

The fact is that the women in our churches, both married and single give huge prayer support. It may well be that the majority of real serious prayer actually comes from the women. Wisdom, spiritual insight, encouragement can underpin so much of what the leaders can achieve.

And let's not forget the priceless role of true mothers in Israel. Mature women who nurture the younger women in those spiritual and practical ways, wise mothers in Israel will solve most of the pastoral problems among the women before they ever reach the ears of the men. Isn't it true? Difficulty personality problems, things that happen between women. You know as well as I do that mature women will deal with all of that, set it all down, just talk things through, pray things through. It never gets to godly, godly mothers in Israel will sort out half the pastoral problems in the church. If you haven't got that, then the leaders are going to deal with all of it.

Let's value our women.

One of my elder's wives taught generations of young women and new converts from the Scriptures how to develop their own personal prayer life and then how to conduct themselves in public prayer. She taught generations of women from the Scriptures to develop their own personal devotional life and then how to conduct themselves. What was appropriate in public prayer. Not everything is appropriate in public prayer. She taught them. She trained them. She got the women of the church praying in a biblical way over 20 years or more she did that. A very valuable ministry.

You have got to encourage women with gift to do that, help them, train them. Let's value our women, not take them for granted and think creatively how we may further develop them in the Lord's service. That is one thing.

Now a second thing. Developing older people. Older people are living longer with better health. Some take early retirement with potentially many years of active life ahead. They can be trained for service both at home and abroad. Some may have far greater potential than was ever seen during their working life because they were so busy. So retired people are a great potential resource. Older people have time to pray together maybe in the daytime getting together for an hour, available to come together like that, seek the Lord. The leaders can provide them with urgent matters, give them things to particularly pray about. And I think it is one of the answers to the lack of prayer in our churches. Retired people. I know a number of churches had an [?] back, having encouraged churches to do this, had emails back saying, "Yeah, we are doing that. That is really... folks are coming together and praying for [?]." It is great, raising the prayer lives of the church.

I see older folks fasting and praying for the anointing of God upon the minister. [?] meet together once fortnight or something. Some of the older folks can pray and fast and pray. Yeah, that God would pour out his Spirit upon the minister of the Church. Pray for conversions.

Older, experienced Christians who know the way to throne of grace, devoting time to uphold the church in the ministry, praying down the Lord's blessing.

You see, soon half the population will be over 50. So older people now are by far our largest missions work, aren't they? By far biggest responsibility in terms of the gospel, evangelism, reaching out, by far, older people, half the population. Who better to evangelize them than their own generation? An older Christian can organize it, can run evangelistic coffee mornings, men's breakfasts, afternoon teas, evangelistic meals, take services at local care homes, reach older folk in our communities with the gospel, run Christianity [?] with the retired people. You see, there is so much focus in our culture today on the young. That is not taken from the Bible. That is taken from culture. That is not taken from the Bible. That is culture. We are not to be guided by culture. We are to be guided by the Bible. And a huge, huge, huge mission responsibility, evangelistic responsibility for half the population.

When did you last hear of a church that real burden for the older folks in their community. No, no, no. That is half the population. They can quietly go to hell in their old age. We don't mind. That is ok for them. We want the young professionals.

Someone said, "If you want to grow a church today. You have got to have a church with young professionals. That is where your leaders come from. That is where you impact. That is where your image, young professionals. That is the focus today."

[?] well it is half the population... no, no, no. They don't make... we don't notice them. They are the older folks. They can quietly drift into hell.

Friends, that is not a biblical... that is contrary. That is not the Bible. Our church has got to wake up to the challenge, our biggest by far, our biggest evangelistic responsibility is older people.

And just by the way, in case you hadn't noticed, half of the younger end didn't go to university. There is 25 percent of the population who are not university educated, many who are dysfunctional, many of them never worked. Who is reaching them? No, no, no. We will focus on the 25 percent, the young professionals. The rest, well, it doesn't really fit our reformed... we are... we are too bookish. We live in the world of ideas.

Young people are open to suggestions. They are open to ideas, you see, intelligent ones, the university students, the young professionals. We don't really come down to the level of ordinary people.

I am being sarcastic, friends, to make a point. We have got to have a bigger vision and we have got to face our responsibilities. And many of our churches are not facing their responsibilities and larger reason is because they are not developing our people to face those challenges.

So, thirdly, older people, hugely important and who better to do that and to reach the older generation than the older generation within our churches? Use the retired people. Develop them into responsible... into leadership.

And then developing young people in the church. The culture teaching, developing and maturing needs to be embraced by our youth leaders. Yes, we want a big vision to reach as many non church kids as possible, of course we do. And leaders need big hearts to persevere through many highs and lows. Youth work can be heart breaking, can't it? But leaders need to invest heavily in young people who are saved and disciple them into a church.

Youth work is often fixated on numbers and not on quality, on gimmicks and not on the gospel. Youth work should be focusing on spiritual depth and building fruit for the future, fruit that lasts, building a new generation of leaders. Where possible, the young people should be given leadership responsibility. It seems as though often in University Christian unions the students from Pentecostal and charismatic churches are the natural leaders. Why? Because they have been given responsibility in their churches.

So often the young people from our churches, who may be better theologically trained, never get an opportunity to be on a committee of the university Christian union because they have not been given experience of leadership.

The majority, I think, of our most able young people, young adults are in secular employment. Only a very few of our most able young people are in full time Christian work. Friends, this is a day when we are crying out for godly men, able men to lead our churches, to evangelize the nation once again. If these young men in our churches are developed early and fired with passion for the gospel, they may be more likely to fear God's call to Christian work and Christian service.

I just put that to you. If we develop our people, if they are growing, prayerfully, spiritually, they are more likely to hear God's call into full time service, full time ministry.

A lot of very, very able people in our churches but they are in the secular world bringing some of them under God's call to be future ministers and our Bible colleges are crying out for them and our churches are calling out of them. They have got to be developed within our church. Then they may hear the call of God if he so chooses.

The young people certainly need to be very well grounded before they go away to university and to the world at work because the fall out rate is too high. They get away from their own home church. The fall out rate is still [?] quite high.

Right, focusing quickly then on developing men. Women, older people, young people, men into training and service. Leaders need to get to know the men of the church. In fact, all men, younger men and older men and build relationships with the men of the church.

Men will tend to keep themselves to themselves. Have you noticed that? Men tend to keep themselves to themselves, unless they are actively befriended, unless they are actively drawn in. Men don't mix as easily as women. They often hide their potential. It is a man thing, as we say, isn't it? It is a man thing. Keep our... we hide it. Keep it within.

Men may be content to pursue their career, their social activities, their home life, not push themselves forward in church life unless specifically encouraged and mentored to do so. There is a lot of wasted potential in the men of our churches. Therefore men need, first, special activities like, I don't know, men's [?] evenings, men's breakfasts, other social activities for the men to relax together, get to know each other and build friendships together. The men of the church. And then leaders may see a different side to them all together and recognize surprising potential which wasn't obvious on the surface. In order to begin this potential, I would suggest, for example, what one of my assistants did when he [?] he is now at [?]. He was at Chesterfield for a time. And with his men he arranged monthly men's breakfasts on Saturday morning and he had visiting speakers who tackled subjects like being a good husband, fatherhood, spiritual leadership in the home, how to balance home, work and church, growing godly leaders. I think I spoke on that, growing godly leaders, apologetics, how to critique our culture, post modernism. Do you know? All sorts of things with the men of the church. It got them talking and engaging. And he saw potential in those men which he wouldn't have seen otherwise, because they wouldn't give enough of themselves away.

Stimulation like this can reveal a hidden potential and potential for leadership.

Then we must proactively seek to develop the men with potential into leadership itself, to get them involved and to provide practical opportunities for them to test out and develop their gifts and not to be alarmed if they make mistakes. We have all made mistakes and, God willing, we have learned by them.

Some could perhaps be mentored by a youth leader, by a deacon as a sort of understudy to develop people with a full range of gifts and leadership, not just those with speaking gifts. There is a danger there, isn't there? There is people with a whole variety of gifts, not just speaking gifts. Potential leaders can be encouraged to take initiatives in evangelism. Our people who are working out in the world should have some idea of what they could perhaps invite friends or colleagues, too, but if the church did this, maybe I could invite that colleague. Maybe I could invite that neighbor. Ok, let them into the church. Come up with proposals. Men's breakfast, meal in an Indian or Chinese restaurant, coffee, speaker at Starbucks, a round of golf followed by a meal and a speaker, whatever it is.

And if their ideas are good, give them the responsibility a couple of them, to go and organize it, including some special prayer. Give them responsibility. This will test their gifts of leadership, test their ability to work together with others. Are they team players? And what about their prayerfulness. You see, testing the ability that men have.

Those with speaking gifts could be encouraged to start speaking at old people's homes, youth meetings, mid week Bible studies and house groups, perhaps. You have home groups. You have got leaders, over busy leaders or begin to develop some of your people to see whether they could develop gifts within those home groups. [?] services when perhaps Sunday ministry at a small church. One of the leaders could go with them and give them some constructive criticism. Eventually if they show clear gifting, they should be given opportunity to preach in their own church.

At [?] people developed towards eldership or full time ministry, especially those who are undergoing theological training. We have brought them into leader's meetings as observers so they could actually experience the leaders seeking the guidance of God together in prayer and in study and so learn leadership first hand. They would, of course, be asked to leave if there was something particular confidential.

Our deacons were chaired by an elder and for years he mentored them, he developed them in the Scriptures. He trained them into the ministry as deacons from the Scriptures.

Perhaps you could study together a future... what looked like [?] book *Growing Leaders in the Church*. I haven't personally engaged with it, but I have heard very good recommendation. Potential leaders could be, perhaps, taken through something like that.

Potential leaders may be wary, as I said, I am going to finish with this, wary, even frightened off by the demands and responsibility of leadership. Even though they want to serve the Lord, they may be afraid to commit, afraid they will be trapped into leadership demands from which there is no escape when they come under extra pressure and responsibility and therefore there has got to be this policy, I believe. People coming into leadership understand. We will support you and if you come under extra pressure, extra responsibility, extra demand, wife having a baby, whatever it is, we will support you. We will give you a sabbatical. We will not drive you to the ground and break you. And I

think more men will come, as I was saying just now. I know a church in the north of England. It has approached two or three men in the last few months in the church to consider coming into the leadership. All have refused, have all refused. Why? I think they are afraid. If they commit to leadership, they look at the commitment of those who are leaders. They just... I just could not cope with that. My marriage couldn't... my wife couldn't handle that. My job, it is just... I couldn't do it. I couldn't give that amount of commitment. So I am not going to ... we have got a sure people. If they come into leadership they will be careful. They will not be abused and they will be supported when they come under real pressure. I think that is a key, an absolute key to bringing people into responsibility.

Well, friends, there is much more I would like to share with you, but I think time we must finish there. Ok, Jared?