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# Implications of Paul's Model for Leadership Training in Light of Church Growth in Africa

By Philip E. Morrison

## Introduction

"I have three churches and I am planting a fourth", an African pastor told me. When I asked him where he had received his training his answer was significant, "I went to a seminar on the 'Life and Letters of Paul' once and received a certificate." This conversation crystallizes the condition of the church in Africa - it is growing quickly and much of the leadership is untrained or undertrained. Reflecting on this rapid growth Edgar Elliston wrote in 1988:

It appears that we are falling further behind in the preparation of church leaders for the number of new churches which are now being established. Now in Africa there are more than 500 ministry training institutions and yet the continual plea is for more leaders.<sup>1</sup>

The situation today seems to be the same as it was in 1988. We are still experiencing rapid church growth in Africa and must ask what this means for the church on the continent.

First, it means that pastors cannot be trained fast enough to match this pace. There is simply not enough capacity in our institutions to produce pastors for all of the churches being planted.<sup>2</sup> For example, Fernando writes:

Theological education has suffered from serious neglect across the African continent. There has undoubtedly been a massive response to the gospel, even after allowing for statistical exaggeration. However, one informed observer has estimated that if every person in leadership training - of every theological persuasion and at every level - were immediately put in a position of pastoral responsibility, every one of them would have to pastor ten churches of 600 members to cover the existing Christian population on the continent. There is a vast deficit of trained leadership in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

And secondly, as a result, it means most churches will be led by untrained and undertrained leaders on any given Sunday.<sup>4</sup> David Livingmore observes that eighty-five percent of the churches of the world are led by people who

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<sup>1</sup> Edgar J. Elliston, "Designing Leadership Education", (*Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, April 1988), p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Not to mention the fact that not all graduates will become pastors in local churches.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Fernando, *Strategic Principles for Formal Theological Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (unpublished paper, August 2009).

<sup>4</sup> This is proof that the Church must be a divine institution. No business or government could survive with this level of untrained leadership! But this is not an excuse to perpetuate the situation.

have no formal training in theology or ministry.<sup>5</sup> In regards to the situation in Africa Steve Van Horn puts this rate even higher: “Up to 90% of the pastors in any given country have never received even one day of training.”<sup>6</sup>

This was brought home to me when a colleague told me about his home area where in one DCC (District Church Council) there are fourteen churches of which eight are led by pastors who have had no training. One of those has been leading the church for fifteen years. Situations like this could easily explain why the African church is often described as being like a lake that is “a mile wide and an inch deep”. While this may seem like an apt description, it isn’t a helpful metaphor when thinking about how we can address the “shallowness” that it implies. How do you make a shallow lake deeper? And how can we apply that metaphor, in practical terms, to the church?

Perhaps thinking of the church in Africa as a building with a weak foundation would be better.<sup>7</sup> An inadequate foundation cannot bear the weight that is built upon it. The more super-structure that is built, the more the cracks in the foundation will become visible. A weak foundation is a disaster waiting to happen.

If leadership is the church’s foundation, then it seems obvious that if we have weak leaders our churches will be weak. Weak leaders will not produce strong churches. Although we need strong denominational leadership, our focus should really be on training the leaders at the local level if we want to develop a mature and healthy church. These local leaders are the ones we expect will provide pastoral care, preach the Word and give spiritual guidance and counsel to the members of the church. However, they often are serving with little or no training and as a result the churches suffer.

### **Does God Have A Plan?**

In light of this I raise the question that since God is causing the growth of the church world-wide, would He not also have a plan and methodology in place for providing leaders and pastoral care for His people? If so, why do we have such a shortage of trained leaders? Surely we cannot lay this state of affairs at His feet! Could we conclude then that the result is either a problem of our own making or a neglect of implementing His plan, which I argue is the methodology used by Paul in the early church?

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<sup>5</sup> David A. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted by Timothy Cantrell, “Launching Church-Strengthening Movements in Africa”, (*Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, Volume 24.1, 2005), p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> It must be stated that the biblical analogy of the church as a building “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20) is not in view here.

What is the solution for this difficult situation? It is not necessarily more training institutions. Elliston observes: "Western missionaries and westernized church leaders need ... to back away from the rush to build more Western training programs."<sup>8</sup> Instead we need to rethink how we train and prepare leaders for the church at the local level. This does not mean that we do away with formal education and training but that we need to think in broader terms to prepare church leaders. We need to embrace the idea that church leaders can also be validly trained by non-formal means outside of the formal academy. And further, we must look at what biblically constitutes a leader in the church.

Perhaps one of the biggest hindrances to providing leaders for the growing church is the traditional clergy-lay distinction which has long characterized the Western church and been adopted in Africa and around the world. This was definitely the case that Paul Gupta confronted as leader of the Hindustan Bible Institute in Chennai, India. He describes the leadership challenge they faced as a result of their goal to plant one million churches in India. The traditional formal method of training church leaders could not fill the need occasioned by India's rapid church growth. However, part of the challenge they faced was the clergy-lay distinction which had a limiting effect on the church's view of who could be a leader. Gupta writes:

Finally, we understood that the largest pool of untrained leaders were the people in our local congregations who had been taught that only ordained pastors do the ministry. Our biggest challenge lay in "the mobilization of the national church to do the work..."<sup>9</sup>

How did the church come to this place? George Cladis observes, "We exchanged Paul's notion of the church as the body of Christ for a clergy-centered '*parish model*' of ministry that usurped the role of the laity." This Western model has been imported to Africa with the resulting misconception among the membership of the churches that ministry is exclusively the work of the pastor. The average person in the church does not feel that they can or should be involved in ministry.<sup>10</sup>

To my way of thinking we need to do away with the clergy-lay distinction as much as possible, as well as the idea that only the ordained leader can serve. We need to emphasize the body of believers being involved in ministry and service. Following Ephesians 4:11-13, Gupta writes:

"...The pastor must understand the urgency to equip his people to participate with him in ministry. Rather than create dependency, he must mentor individuals in the congregation to be about the work of the kingdom. He

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<sup>8</sup> Elliston, "Designing Leadership Education", p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Paul R. Gupta and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 2006), pp. 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> Philip E. Morrison, *The Multi-Church Pastor* (Allentown, Pennsylvania: Gratia Veritas Publishers, 2004), p. 43. The Cladis quote in this paragraph is also on page 43.

should help people recognize their gifts, point out open doors for ministry, and watch over and foster the progress of believers seeking to follow the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

I am not saying that we should not have trained pastors or those functioning in that role. Admittedly there is an ecology of training.<sup>12</sup> Those who have been educated in the Bible college or seminary need to pass their high level of training on down the line. Their biblical ministry within the body is vital but often not being fulfilled within the church. Often the educated pastor is not following the training model of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2. But the way to provide leadership for the African church is found in this model.

### Paul's Training Model

To outline this idea we need to look at the training model of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2: "*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.*" Examining this text we see a progression that is followed as information and skills are shared from one level to the next.

***Paul→Timothy→Faithful Men→Others***<sup>13</sup>

As we look at this progression we see that training gets passed from person to person and note that as one moves down the line the less "positional" the leaders become. It would seem that the emphasis of this non-formal training is on those who are the "lay" leaders at the grassroots level in the local churches. We could picture it this way:

***Apostle→Pastor→Elders→People***

In light of this leadership training progression where has the church in general, and in Africa specifically, put its primary emphasis and the bulk of its resources in training? I believe it has gone into institutional pastoral training!

***Apostle→Pastor→Elders→People.***

Institutional pastoral training is important and I am not arguing against it. What I am concerned about is the imbalance of the Church's training priorities. Pastoral training does not seem to be Paul's main emphasis or end goal. His emphasis seems to be on those leaders who were to be raised up within the local congregation as seen below. (Then perhaps from those leaders one might rise to the "pastor" position.)

***Apostle→Pastor→Elders→People***

<sup>11</sup> Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to Mark Shaw who used this terminology in a conversation regarding church leadership training.

<sup>13</sup> Paul is actually following the methodology of Jesus. We could put Jesus' place in the model like this: ***Jesus→Apostles→Faithful Men→Others***

Therefore, if the reality is that many, if not most, of our churches are being led by untrained elders and the socially powerful people in the local congregations, without the supervision of a trained pastor, are we not missing an important element of church leadership by not training those de facto leaders? Are we not, at least, unbalanced in our focus?

Secondly, as we look at these verses we ask where is the context of training? It is the local church. Where is the context of training located in the African church? Can we really say it is in the local church? I believe not. There are some examples, such as Theological Education by Extension (TEE), but generally little is being done locally to train church leaders. Most of it is done outside of the local church setting in Bible colleges and seminaries.

What is the type of training that we emphasize in the African church? I would say that it is formal and located in the training institutions. While in the early church there were no training institutions for the leaders to attend, in our contemporary church many of the leaders also cannot attend such institutions, either because of their lack of education or financial means. Thus, the net result is the same and therefore the type of training today should be the same as it was in Paul's time. What is this type of training? As I look at 2 Timothy 2:2, I see that Paul's model was non-formal training *immersed* in the local church. Much of our model has been formal training *isolated* from the local church and centered on the academic context. Gupta's and Lingenfelter's comments on this situation are very much to this point:

Theological training institutions may better serve the larger body by adopting different methods to equip pastors to train others in their congregations to lead. Schools must not expect all leaders to come to them. Rather, they must go to the people, understand their need, and develop training that will serve the development of leadership in the region and in the context of the church and local culture.<sup>14</sup>

Paul's method emphasized "on the job training" as one man mentored the next. It was training and ministry in the local context. It was natural learning based on real life situations in the community where the leaders had grown up and lived. Any ministry that took place would be observed and received by people who knew them. There could be no hiding from the scrutiny of their neighbors and families. Ministry and character were formed in the crucible of their community, not in the isolated atmosphere of the academy. Kirsh writes:

The biblical model is much more hands on, more of a mentorship and/or apprenticeship approach. A more biblical model could be utilized effectively across Africa, especially at the lay and diploma levels of training. This would effectively close the gap between theory and practice, offering the learner greater opportunity to reflect on the subject, while also applying it in practical ways. This apprenticeship or "in-service-training" model would temper our

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<sup>14</sup> Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, p. 209.

current methods of theological education with a more holistic and practical element, thus increasing capacity for training without removing the learner from the local context. It would also speed the rate at which training can take place, which addresses a great need on the continent.<sup>15</sup>

Although missions, churches and institutions state that their goal is to train pastors they seem to be missing the mark, and thus the situation of the local church remains the same: untrained or undertrained leadership. People concerned about training and developing leadership within the African church need to carefully re-evaluate their focus and methods. We need to ask ourselves some hard questions. Are we really accomplishing our stated goals? Bruce Nicholls puts it very clearly:

Our programs of theological education must orient themselves pervasively in terms of the Christian community being served ... At every level of design and operation our programs must be visibly determined by a close attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the Christian community we serve. To this end, we must establish multiple modes of ongoing interaction between program and church, both at grassroot and official level...our programs must become manifestly of the church, through the church and for the church.<sup>16</sup>

## Practical Considerations in Focusing on More Church-Based Training

### 1. The Role of Training Institutions

Firstly, the training must be contextualized for Africa. Bible colleges and seminaries need to focus more on equipping their pastoral studies students in the area of training the church's leaders on the grassroots level. This means that the training provided must be closely linked with the student's ministry context. This is not a new idea and is just as pertinent to training church leaders whether in Asia, Latin America or in Africa. David M. Kasali writes:

Any theology developed must be adequately *focused* [emphasis his] on the real-life needs of the African Christian. Any African theology must scratch where the Africans are itching. Often times our theologies in Africa scratch where the Americans and Europeans itch and leaving the African itching all over with nothing to scratch. In this light, theological education must be more focused and the theological agenda set by the realities of the African.<sup>17</sup>

If we substitute the word *methodology* for *theology* in Kasali's statement, we see that the first step training institutions must take is to examine the focus of their training model to see if it takes into account the burgeoning growth of

<sup>15</sup> William Kirsh, "Missional Tensions in Africa" in *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions in Africa*, p. 152. <http://www.decadeofpentecost.org/ebooks/globalizing-pentecostal-missions-ebook.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Bruce J. Nicholls as quoted by Mvula J. Mvula, *Is the Seminary the Servant of the Church?* <http://theologicaleducation.org/2010/09/29/is-the-seminary-the-servant-of-the-church-mvula-j-mvula/>

<sup>17</sup> David M. Kasali, *Doing Theology in Africa*, (Unpublished paper delivered at Wheaton Graduate School, Wheaton, Illinois, November 5, 2002), p. 5.

the African church. Are Pastoral Theology departments preparing pastors who will be able to meet the reality on the ground? This reality is that there are not enough trained pastors for a 1:1 ratio of pastors to churches. Therefore we must ask, "Is the training practical in its approach so that it equips the students in line with what they will encounter after they graduate and move into ministry? Will they be equipped to serve in a multi-church pastor setting? Will they be trained in the practical methodology of preparing local church leaders to provide pastoral care and lead the congregation when they are not on site?"

Some of my students raised this concern. "We are mostly trained to ... teach a lesson, to preach. In very few incidences are we taught how to teach others." "The biggest challenge to the Bible schools is to enlighten the students to the real situation outside, and to help them make learning a life-long process. This is the process of training trainers to train others."<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, engaging with the reality on the ground may necessitate a re-evaluation of the curriculum and the perspective from which it is presently being taught. Victor Cole agrees with this when he says:

[W]e cannot afford to train leaders out of the context in which they will function. To this end, church-school relationships must be strengthened. Theological schools must not serve as ivory towers removed from the real day-to-day situations in the churches for which candidates are being trained. Theological schools in Africa should serve as resource centres for the churches - finding ways to help answer questions raised in the churches.<sup>19</sup>

Thirdly, it would be a useful exercise for formal training institutions to do a self-analysis to determine exactly how many of their graduates are actually pastoring churches at the grassroots level. From my observation many graduates move on to become chaplains at hospitals, schools and prisons. Many take up positions in para-church groups and Christian NGOs. A fair number continue on in their education and others end up in teaching positions at formal training institutions. Even those who return to the field are often put into positions of leadership in the denominational hierarchy and thus do not settle into a pastoral role at the grassroots level. This being the case, the individual local church is still deprived of trained leadership. If this is true, can our formal training institutions accurately say they are preparing pastors for the church? It may be a stated goal, but is it an achieved reality?

In light of the answers to these questions, the institutions might have to retool their programmes so that they are not only providing workers for these other ministries but also focusing on meeting the needs of the church. The Church is the Bride of Christ. The Church is the object of his sacrificial love

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<sup>18</sup> John Mbugua, untitled. (Unpublished paper, Moffat College of Bible, July 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Victor Cole, "The Training of Leaders for the Ministry: Implications for Theological Education", (*Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, Volume 10, 1991), p. 42.

and affection. And since that is true of Christ, it should be true of those of us in theological education. Jesus did not say, "I will build Bible Colleges and Seminaries." He did not say, "I will build para-Church groups and Christian NGO's." He said, "I will build my Church."

Those of us in theological education should not lose sight of this fact. Other goals and issues can distract us, including concerns to attract more students in order to survive so that we end up serving our institutions instead of serving the Church. If we have as our goal serving the Church by developing leadership that will care for the Bride of Christ, our service will be in line with what is dearest to the heart of Jesus. And if that is so, by faith we can trust and believe that He will provide for all of our needs for survival.

An additional self-evaluative question should be asked of those graduates who are pastoring churches: "Are you actively and intentionally involved in training your church leaders according to Paul's 2 Timothy 2:2 model?" This, in some sense will be a measure of how effectively the theological institution is ministering to the church on the grassroots level.

Patrick Johnstone speaks to the fact that seminaries, as part of the body of Christ, are accountable to the church and he makes these insightful comments about how the training institution should shift its thinking in relation to the preparation of church leaders:

The whole curriculum, discipling and internship programme needs to be sensitive to the envisaged ministry of their students. This will mean radical changes from the old pattern of academia with an ivory tower seclusion during the time of study. It will be uncomfortable and untidy, but there needs to be more flexibility, wider transferability of credits academically and globally, a combination of periods of study interspersed with spans of ministry, with the subjects studied geared to the next stage of ministry. A new paradigm in theological education has arrived in which we move into a lifetime of study for a lifetime of ministries... Are we willing for the wrenching changes in our institutions to permit this? Are we willing to slaughter our sacred cows of tradition, academic freedom and pride for our own ways of doing things? For Christ's sake and for his expanding kingdom we should.<sup>20</sup>

The Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala is an example of what Johnstone advocates. This theological institution struggled to prepare their students to serve in a wide range of ministry needs. As a result they developed training focused on the student in his ministry context outside of the seminary setting. Their programme (Theological Education by Extension) was based on the belief that the seminary would need to go to the student rather than the student coming to the seminary. This enabled the context of the student to be taken into consideration and used as a part of his/her training.

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, (Bulstrode, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, UK: WEC International, 2005), p. 203.

Many of the prospective seminary students were already running parishes and involved in various areas of ministry. Now, instead of abandoning ministry work and uprooting themselves and their families to attend a residential seminary, they remained at home.....remaining economically active and involved in their ministry. Instead of attending lectures they studied course material (especially written for education by extension) supplied to them by the seminary and they met regularly in groups with a tutor to discuss the academic work and how it related to the praxis; the actual practice of ministry among God's people. Thus TEE is not merely correspondence or distance education; it is supported by a tutorial structure which enables the study to become contextualised.<sup>21</sup>

This kind of training is a fine example of how a theological institution can follow the spirit of Paul's method as outlined above- local church leaders being equipped in their context. They then train their members so that they can become more than "a superficial community of people who lack understanding and obedience to the teachings of Jesus, and who have no understanding of how to engage their communities with the transforming power of the gospel".<sup>22</sup>

One very important service theological institutions can provide to the church is in relation to governmental requirements. For example, in one country, there is the possibility that the government will mandate that local church leaders have a certain level of formal education. If this is required, then it seems formal training institutions can solve that need in a strategic way and adapt their curriculum to fit the context.<sup>23</sup> In this way they can serve the church by doing for it something it cannot do for itself.

A final consideration is the possibility of developing on-line and distance learning possibilities. The African continent is slowly becoming "connected" and the younger generation is becoming computer literate. While this on-line learning is not an option for all potential leaders at present, it is one that theological educational institutions should explore and prepare for now by committing resources and personnel to develop a curriculum and infrastructure to deliver this type of training. If a theological institution has not begun to prepare for this, it is already behind the curve and missing a great opportunity to serve the Church with this method of equipping church leaders.

## 2. The Role of Denominations

Denominations must focus on non-formal training methods to train those pastors and church leaders who may never have the opportunity to attend formal educational training institutions. William Kirsh states:

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<sup>21</sup> I have edited and adapted this quotation from

<http://globalministries.org/africa/partners/theological-education-by.html>

<sup>22</sup> Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>23</sup> I was asked by my source not to mention specific details about this possible requirement by the government of the country in which he is serving.

The key is not to lock our training programs into predetermined patterns that do not fit our needs on the continent. The African church needs to continually evaluate its theological training programs in light of both financial realities and the training needs of the church...The African church must ask itself, "Are our training programs based on western Enlightenment systems or on a more biblical model?" How was ministry formation done in Old Testament prophetic circles? What was Jesus' model in training His disciples? How did Paul mentor those whom he raised up for ministry? It seems that an examination of how ministry formation took place in biblical times can inform our current practice to greater effectiveness. *It is an area that is essentially unexplored in theological training today largely because the church is committed to its well-established educational intuitions (sic)*<sup>24</sup>, *institutions that are struggling for survival in the West* (emphasis mine).<sup>25</sup>

This means that denominations should intentionally promote localized grassroots training. They must realign their priorities to make this type of training a reality. First, this calls for a commitment to provide personnel who will be dedicated to the hard and time-consuming task of training and mentoring. Secondly, this means a commitment to redirect financial resources to accomplish the task. Neglecting this will result in the continued weakness of the local churches and ultimately the demise of the denomination itself.

### 2.1 Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

One way for denominations to promote training at the grassroots level is to intentionally and fully support, both organizationally and financially, existing non-formal programmes such as Theological Education by Extension (T.E.E.).<sup>26</sup> This is already a proven curriculum that could be taken and put into place. I talked to a rural pastor who had been a policeman and had gone through the T.E.E. course. He enthusiastically spoke of the preparation it had given him for his ministry. However, without denominational endorsement or economic support some may not view it as desirable or financially feasible.

Pastors in ministry cannot fund such a programme. One pastor related to me how he tried to implement T.E.E. among the elders of the churches under his care. The elders agreed to the training but refused to pay for the books. After going through two books with them the pastor discontinued the training because he could not afford purchasing the materials from his own funds.

<sup>24</sup> I believe the word should be "institutions."

<sup>25</sup> Kirsh, "Missional Tensions in Africa", pp. 151, 152.

<sup>26</sup> In my research I found that some T.E.E. programmes are run by denominations and others are overseen by Bible Colleges and Universities. For example in Kenya, The Presbyterian University of East Africa lists 27,000 in their TEE programme. (<http://cio100.cio.co.ke/cio/the-presbyterian-university-of-east-africa/>). A smaller college is TEE College in Johannesburg, South Africa which is a distance-learning institution with a current enrollment of 3,200 students from five Southern African countries (<http://www.tee.co.za/>).

However, if the denomination helped to subsidize this programme and viewed it as an essential part an ongoing strategy of providing trained leadership for all of its congregations, it could begin to make an impact. Various denominations might desire to supplement the curriculum to deal with their own doctrinal perspectives. In addition, modules relating to church leadership and administration could be added to give a more complete preparation. However, using the programme would give a path to follow without having to reinvent the course of study from the ground up.

### *2.2 Reading Courses and Ministerial Conventions*

Another idea for non-formal education would be to develop a reading course. Those enrolled would be expected to read the books in a three year period. Each year would have specifically prescribed books (1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year), and would cover a span of subjects such as: theology, pastoral practice, spiritual formation, and church history. (Original languages could not be covered in this context.) At the end of each year those enrolled would be given an examination on the reading they had done. These scores would be reported to the denominational official in charge of the reading programme. Obviously, the books would have to be chosen carefully for appropriate educational levels. It would seem advisable that African authorship should be given priority if titles on these topics were available.<sup>27</sup>

A complement to the reading course would be an annual pastors and elders ministerial convention. Those in the reading course would be expected to attend each year. This convention would be a continuing education programme and its focus would be more on pastoral practice and less about theology and history. A theme could be chosen each year, three or four presentations could be given which would develop the topic and then a discussion could be moderated on practical issues related to it. If the denomination required all of the pastors to attend (and supported it organizationally and financially) it would demonstrate a clear commitment to personal and pastoral growth. It would also give those in the reading course the opportunity to rub shoulders with experienced pastors and to gain insights from them.

After completing the reading course and attending the ministerial conventions, pastors-in-training would be examined by the denominational leaders as to their call and readiness for ministry. If approved they would serve a two year probationary appointment under the mentoring of an experienced

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<sup>27</sup> A valuable resource for locating books for such a reading course would be Richard L. Starcher and Enosh A. Anguandia, *Textbooks For Theological Education In Africa: An Annotated Bibliography*. (Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria: Africa Christian TextbookS (ACTS), 2007. Available at: [http://www.ecwaevangel.org/textbiblio/biblio\\_all.pdf](http://www.ecwaevangel.org/textbiblio/biblio_all.pdf)

pastor. Following this term of service they would be considered by the denomination for licensing and enter into the credentialing process.

Along with promoting the non-formal training of their church leaders, denominations need to elevate this type of training. Unfortunately, there is a certain elitism that can creep into our church structures and even infect members of the congregation, such that unless one has a higher degree his call and ministerial gifts may not be appreciated or affirmed. Those who receive non-formal training should be able to receive credentials and have their call recognized through ordination just as those who receive formal education. This means that certain levels and standards would have to be met by those who would follow this different path of training. Non-formal training, if it is done with quality, proper standards and assessment should not be viewed as second best, or only supplementary training, or as a lesser form of achieving credentials, but as an alternative plan.

### **3. The Role of Church Leaders**

Current church and denominational leaders must embrace the ideal of passing on what they have learned to the younger generation. The church in Africa is a youthful church filled with a vibrant, energetic and increasingly educated population. There is great potential that is waiting to be tapped and channeled into building the kingdom. Yet, the present generation of established leaders may be overlooking or ignoring the responsibility they have to provide upcoming church leaders with the foundational knowledge and requisite skills for church leadership.

What is necessary if training and mentoring is going to take place? It means there has to be a change of attitude by church leaders who must be willing to share what they have learned with younger pastors and leaders within their churches. One of the reasons I have discovered pastors don't want to train others is that they feel threatened by those who may be more gifted than themselves. They are fearful that they may be supplanted by the younger men and so they refuse to train and pass on what they have learned and gained by experience to the next generation. The question then must be asked, "Whose kingdom are they building?" Church leadership should not be an elite club. Older pastors, if they are going to build the kingdom of God - and not their own - must break the tradition of hanging onto power and position and commit themselves to mentoring the upcoming generation of leadership for the church. They must become future driven instead of fear driven. If not, the growing church in Africa will be crippled due to lack of adequately trained and developed leaders.

When will the church in Africa develop enough adequately trained local church leaders? It will happen when Paul's model is implemented. In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul gives a practical example of the pastor-teacher's role in training: "*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare*

*God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*" Paul is saying the leaders should not simply pass on training to faithful men but to the whole church. This is because in God's plan for the Church everyone is involved in serving the Lord. Since that is the case everyone should be trained and disciplined with the result that the body of Christ will be built up. Instead of holding on to power and his position by hindering others from growing and using their gifts or by neglecting to train them, the pastor empowers and equips them to do the work. Gupta and Lingenfeleter agree:

Every pastor and church must take the responsibility to equip members to lead by making disciples of others. The professionally-led church is a distortion of God's plan and purpose. We return to the pattern of the church in Acts, where apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers made disciples and empowered people in local churches to shepherd and disciple others. God gave gifts of leadership in the people He calls to the church; pastors must learn to identify, equip, and release them to serve the body interdependently in fulfilling the needs of the church...The strength of the church - and its ability to serve its people and fulfill its mission - is directly proportionate to its success at developing leaders for ministry to its people.<sup>28</sup>

Recently, in a seminar where I was training church leaders, I met a pastor from Uganda who was putting Paul's model (as outlined above) into practice. He graduated from Bible college with a diploma and planted four churches. Each time he was planting a new church, he was training those whom he called "associate pastors" who could take over the new ministry once it was established. It is in this manner that these new churches have been provided with pastoral care totally outside of the traditional path of formal training.

#### **4. The Role of the Holy Spirit**

What is another reason that church leaders or pastors in local church contexts fail to train and empower God's people? Why are we reluctant to allow church members to use their gifts and exercise leadership? May I suggest that it is because we don't trust the Holy Spirit? Do we trust Jesus through His Spirit to guide the Church and its members? Or do we think He only gifts and empowers the "clergy"? Do we allow Him to be the Head of the Church or do we usurp that role by our insistence on controlling access to ministry by reserving it for the clergy alone? How does our practice answer those questions? "What? Trust the Holy Spirit? We can't do that...!" (Of course we would never verbalize that! But do our actions prove it?)

Let us examine the relationship of the Holy Spirit and leadership selection in the early church. In Acts 6 a crisis over the feeding of the Hellenistic widows arose. As part of the solution the church was told to select leaders whose qualifications were that they men of good reputation, *full of the Spirit* (emphasis mine) and of wisdom. When we think of the chronology it

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<sup>28</sup> Gupta and Lingenfeleter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, p. 209.

seems these men would have been relatively new believers and yet the apostles had no problem of allowing them to assume positions of leadership. Isn't it reasonable to believe they trusted the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives and leadership of these men?

Paul's strategy seems to follow this pattern as we see him appointing men to be elders a relatively short time after their conversion (at least compared to many churches in Africa). Let's put this example in context. In Acts 13:52 we read, "*And the disciples were continually filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (NASB).*" We need to emphasize that these were new believers who had come to know the Lord under Paul's ministry in Pisidian Antioch (vs. 14). And yet on the return leg of his first missionary journey to visit the churches he had planted, Luke records that he appointed elders in every city (Acts 14:23). Who were in this pool of potential leaders which Paul could draw from? He only had these new Holy Spirit-filled believers.<sup>29</sup>

How could Paul do that? He had to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit in his choice and the work of the Holy Spirit in those elders who had no training at all and very little discipleship. I find it incredible that Paul did that. Wouldn't we say that a church planter was being very irresponsible if he did the same today? Paul's trust in the Holy Spirit in relation to church leadership is underscored in Acts 20:28 (NIV) where he addresses the Ephesian elders and says, "*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.*" It is the Holy Spirit who was at work in a plurality of church leaders to provide pastoral care for the Ephesian church. It was not left to an elite clergy.

It is naïve to think that the way to avoid problems in the church is to keep the control of ministry and leadership solely in the hands of the clergy. Formal training, ordination and installation into a pastoral position do not guarantee

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<sup>29</sup> Is there a tension between Paul's practice of appointing elders shortly after he planted the church and what he says about an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:6, "he must not be a recent convert". One possibility is that the appointing of elders did not take place until the second visit of Paul and Barnabas to these churches. Although admittedly short, this would have given the church time to identify those whom God had gifted in the areas of pastor-teacher and leadership. A second possibility may be found in the context of 1 Timothy itself as compared with Paul's instructions to Titus. The injunction that the elder "must not be a recent convert" is left out of Paul's directive to Titus to "appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5). What is the difference? The church in Ephesus was well established while the work on Crete was young and all the converts were new. Therefore, in Ephesus there was no need for new converts to be put into leadership while in Crete (as well as the churches in Acts 14) there was no other option. For this insight I am indebted to Bob Utley, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy, SGCSNT, Vol. 9*, Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, page 58. Accessed via <http://www.ibiblio.org/freebiblecommentary/pdf/EN/VOL09.pdf>.

spiritual maturity. There are enough cases of serious moral and spiritual failure by those in that class to disabuse anyone of that notion! Did Paul fear immaturity in the leaders, syncretism or other such dangers in the early church? I don't believe so. In Acts 20:29-30 Paul acknowledges that there would be external and internal attacks upon the Ephesian church and yet he was comfortable and confident to leave the leadership and future ministry of the flock in their Spirit-guided hands. As a result he could: "*commit [them] to God and to the word of his grace, which [could] build them up* (Acts 20:32)."

To allow our fears to be the reason we don't empower our church members for leadership and ministry is not consistent with the Pauline pattern, which was to trust the Holy Spirit to oversee and guide the Church.

If we are going to provide leadership for the growing church in Africa we must learn to trust Jesus as the Head of the Church to lead all of His Spirit-filled members to use their gifts to build the kingdom. Anything less is not biblical. As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:16: "*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*" (emphasis mine).

### **Conclusion**

We have raised a number of issues relating to the need for a reevaluation of our present day methodology of providing leadership for the African church. Leaders in denominations and theological educational institutions must be willing to evaluate the effectiveness of their present practice in providing pastoral leadership for the church. They must ask if they are truly meeting the needs of the church through the present traditional formal education model.

As we have said, it is not a matter of exclusively choosing formal or non-formal education. Instead we should be looking at both forms of training as complimentary methods of providing leadership for the church. Every church does not need a pastor who holds an advanced degree. However, every church should have a leader who has had training in basic theology and pastoral skills and, most importantly, in spiritual formation.

A.B. Bruce in his masterful work on the training of the twelve disciples summarizes the thinking behind the methodology Jesus used whereby he invested three years of personal intimate teaching and mentoring of those he had chosen for leadership. He writes:

the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others... Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve... The careful painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be

founded on the rock of the deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, we need to come to grips with the way Jesus trained his disciples and the way it was implemented in the early church by Paul. It may not be easy to follow this methodology in our context and in our generation. It will take great courage to think in new and creative ways to provide proper pastoral care for the body of Christ, but the future strength and the health of the church depends upon it. Robert Coleman comments:

Let us begin where we are and train a few of the lowly to become great... Here is where we must begin, just like Jesus. It will be slow, tedious, painful and probably unnoticed by men at first, but the end result will be glorious, even if we don't live to see it. Seen this way ...it becomes a big decision in the ministry. One must decide where he wants his ministry to count - in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he has gone. Really it is a question of which generation we are living for.<sup>31</sup>

What would happen in our training institutions if, along with pursuing a high level of biblical scholarship, we would make it a priority to serve the church by intentionally focusing on the grassroots leaders and equipping them? These will not necessarily be scholars but are the shepherds who in fact need support and training.

What would happen if our denominations intentionally invested in training their local congregational leaders and encouraged them in the work of shepherding the flock? What difference would we see in the health and strength of our churches if we had leaders who were trained in godliness and basic church leadership skills?

If Jesus was willing to focus on fisherman and tax collectors and entrust to them the great enterprise of building and shepherding the Church, should we not be willing to focus on the farmers, businessmen, tradesmen, school teachers and others who are the recognized and actual leaders in our local congregations? It is only by developing and training church leaders at this local level that we will be able to provide the spiritual care, nurture, discipline and biblical grounding that is needed for the multitudes of believers who make up the congregations of the African church.

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<sup>30</sup> A.B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1988), p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), pp. 36-37.

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