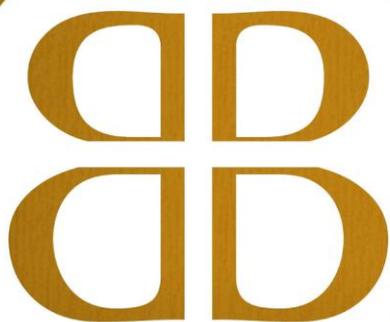


Ministerial Training

THE BIBLE'S NORMATIVE
PATTERN

by TIM CUMMINGS



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Tim Cummings
Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern

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Tim Cummings

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Introduction

The Bible speaks authoritatively to every aspect of church life, and where the church is willing to abandon or adjust customary or pragmatic practices according to the Scriptures, she will be blessed. This occurred in Germany and Switzerland when biblical eldership was introduced; in Scotland when the diaconate was revived; and in the United States when biblical counseling principles were applied. An examination of the proper mode of theological education for men aspiring to be teaching elders, combined with a willingness to conform modern practice to biblical principle, can only result in blessing.¹

The purpose of this paper is to present biblical principles regarding the method of theological education. I will (1) present principles regarding the method of theological education in a biblical-theological manner from the old covenant and then the new; and (2) present additional considerations connected to the church as a training center, the history of theological training, and the necessity of full-orbed training.

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones notes that the method of theological education is not a "given." The method, as well as the content, must be subjected to the scrutiny of Scripture. See Lloyd-Jones, "A Protestant Evangelical College," in *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions, 1942-1977* (1989; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 2001), 358-360.

Theological Education Under the Old Covenant

Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, and the “sons of the prophets”

It is common practice for authors to compare modern theological seminaries to the organization described as the "sons of the prophets" in the books of I and II Kings.² Groups of prophets existed during the ministry of Samuel and the reign of Saul (I Sam. 10:5,10; 19:19-20). Groups comprising "sons of the prophets" are mentioned in Scripture in close conjunction with the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha, especially the latter. This mentor-learner relationship, therefore, will be examined first.

Elisha left both his home and his calling to follow a man of God and be prepared for the ministry of the word (I Kings 19:19-21).³ As one being prepared for prophetic ministry, he ministered to Elijah (I Kings 19:19-21; II Kings 3:11). Elijah had already conducted extensive public ministry of the same sort that Elisha would be prepared for (I Kings 19:19-21). One being prepared for ministry may properly insist on accompanying the man he is following, once the initial arrangement has been formed (II Kings 2:1-14). The development of a close relationship between teacher and trainee is important, it appears, to healthy education. This is a principle not generally stressed in the academic model of theological education so common in Western Europe and North America.

It must be observed, of course, that the sons of the prophets were involved in a ministry of special revelation that does not continue today

² The phrase "school of the prophets" is not uncommon, though the phrase never appears in Scripture. For example, it is the title of the second chapter of Samuel Eliot Morison's *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936).

³ And he went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. And he was plowing, twelve pairs before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him, and cast his cloak on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and follow after you." And he said to him, "Go, return, for what have I done to you?" And he turned back from after him and took a pair of the oxen and slaughtered the oxen with an article and boiled the flesh and gave it to the people, and they ate. And he arose and followed after Elijah, and ministered to him (author's translation).

(I Kings 20:35-43).⁴ In addition, while these sons of the prophets closely associated with men of God, they were also involved in public ministry themselves; it would seem they should not be viewed as equivalent to men in a pre-ordination stage of ministry. So while general principles regarding theological education may be gleaned from their activity, biblical reserve must be exercised in the gleaning of such principles. Nevertheless, the principles noted below may be gleaned from their activity.

First, these men involved in the ministry of the word lived together in various locations (II Kings 2:1-18; II Kings 6:1-7), and ate together, trusting God to provide for them (II Kings 4:38-41). There is something healthy about men of like mind and like calling associating together constantly. This was the case also with Christ's disciples and with Paul's missionary teams. There is also something healthy about such men going together to interact with men of God involved in ministry to the church (II Kings 2:1-18). This, it seems, is a fine precedent for men in ministry attending theological conferences for edification and fellowship. In any interaction between such tight-knit groups of men and prominent men involved in the ministry of the church, men whose ministry God has blessed ought to be treated with great respect (II Kings 2:15), and their lawful admonitions ought to be carefully heeded (II Kings 2:16-18). It is good for men in such groups to be married and have children (II Kings 4:1), despite the rigors of their life, even as Christ's disciples were married (I Cor. 9:5). (Of course there are exceptions to this, as in the case of Paul (I Cor. 9:5), Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. 16:1-2f.; Ezek. 24:15-27f.)). No principle requires every man to wait until after theological training to get married (due to these precedents and the qualification for teaching elders in I Tim. 3:2). It is fitting, further, for men in such groups to live together, and even move together (II Kings 6:1-7), and to be comparatively young (II Kings 9:1-4). It is also fitting for men in such groups to perform missions for men of God who have authority over them (II Kings 9:1-4). In the case of these "sons of the prophets," as in the case of Elisha and Elijah, training involves service.

⁴ The prophetic ministry, in Scripture, is a ministry of delivering new, inerrant messages from God. This unique prophetic task was not meant to last indefinitely; prophecy was to conclude in conjunction with the redemptive work of Christ (Dan. 9:24). The passage in Daniel about the sealing up of "vision and prophecy" comports with the language of Paul, who speaks of the "apostles and prophets" together comprising, with Christ, the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20)—a foundation laid but once.

Service and education are woven together, as in the case of Christ's disciples.

It has been suggested that the organizational unit of the “sons of the prophets” was a “school.” The problem with this oft-cited hypothesis is that there is no biblical evidence for it. The Old Testament simply does not speak of such a school. It speaks of a company (*lahaqah* - להקִיף) or band of prophets over which Samuel presided (I Sam. 19:20f.). This indicates that there were men with prophetic gifts who gathered for mutual edification, with a certain organization due to the recognized superiority of God's chosen national leaders: Samuel (I Sam. 19), Elijah, and—when Elijah's spirit rested on him—Elisha. We must be careful, however, not to make more of this phenomenon than is warranted by Scripture itself, or to speculate about the precise nature and activities of this organization.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist, like Elijah, operated under the old covenant administration (Lk. 5:33-39). Like Christ, he had disciples. The term disciple (Greek: μαθητής) is derived from the verb μανθάνω, which means “to learn.” The derived noun denotes a student, a learner. These students gathered around John, much like the prophets gathered around Samuel and Elijah, and spent much time with him in order to receive a Christ-centered theological education. Under John's tutelage, his disciples were directed to Christ as Savior and Teacher (Jn. 1:35-43) and taught how to pray (Lk. 11:1), and engaged in the disciplines of prayer and fasting (Lk. 5:33; cf. Mt. 9:14). As Elisha ministered to Elijah, John's disciples assisted him (Mt. 11:2; Lk. 7:18-19). John's ministry to them was similar to Christ's ministry to His disciples, and at least two of John's disciples became Jesus' disciples (Jn. 1:35-43).

Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist were all men specifically called by God to the ministry of the people for His people. It is in this context that they were involved in training disciples. The importance of training men in the context of the church will be presented more fully in the section dealing with the new covenant.

Theological Education Under the New Covenant

Though the above principles certainly inform theological education after the establishment of the new covenant (Lk. 22:20), it must be remembered, first, that old covenant revelation on this issue is quite limited. Second, as in any instance where old covenant principles are used to inform new covenant practice, the light of old covenant wisdom must be viewed through the lens of new covenant precept and example. The failure of the Roman Church to make sufficient use of new covenant revelation for this purpose led to great problems in their church government (giving church officers the title of "priest" and viewing them as mediators between God and men) and their sacramentology (viewing the Eucharist as a re-sacrifice of Christ).

On the other hand, the NT contains a massive amount of instruction on this issue, largely in its accounts of the ministries of Christ and Paul. I hope that the description below, though not exhaustive, might be sufficient to indicate the deep well of instruction regarding the methodology of theological education that exists in the four gospel accounts.

Christ and His disciples

Christ, in His training of the twelve, was training the leaders of the church of the new covenant period, indeed, the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). Thus, His ministry to them was, on the one hand, in some sense unique, for a foundation is only laid once. At the same time, since He was training leaders—teaching elders (I Pet. 5:1; II Jn. 1; III Jn. 1) for leadership in His church, His training of them must be viewed as a model for the theological instruction of teaching elders today. The principles listed below focus on Christ's ministry as a model for theological education. Many of these principles reflect the models of the old covenant administration (culminating in John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ and saw some disciples transfer to Christ's supervision), and anticipate the early church model of the apostle Paul (initiated by Christ, who called Paul as an apostle), demonstrating in

Christ's own ministry the cohesive nature of the OT and NT covenantal administrations in the matter of ministerial training.⁵

First, let us examine the nature of the *discipleship relationship* between Christ and His disciples, and draw from it normative principles for theological education. We may note, first, that the Teacher selected his trainees (Mt. 4:18-22). We live in an age of voluntarism, where people may assume that if they *want* to do something, they *ought* to do it. It would seem from Scripture, however, that the external call of the church to direct a man to pursue theological training as a preparation for ministry is necessary. In addition, the church, and a student's instructor(s) ought to help potential trainees to count the cost of pastoral training (Mt. 8:19-20), and the difficulties of ministry (Mt. 10:16-17, 23).

The process of theological instruction is by nature a very personal one, one that necessitates close relationship. As we noted in the cases of Samuel, Elijah, and John the Baptist, it is appropriate for a teacher to have more than one trainee learning from him at once.⁶ At the same time, however, it is important for the teacher to interact with his trainees at an individual level (Mk. 8:14-21, 27-29; Jn. 6:5-7).⁷ The teacher himself must spend much time with his trainees; indeed, he must live with them to some degree (Mk. 3:14;⁸ cf. Jn. 1:35-43).⁹ The rationale for this close

⁵ Since I am here focusing on applying Christ's training principles to our present situation, I have avoided the use of the term "disciple" in the list below to avoid confusion (1) with the unique position of Christ's disciples, (2) with the position of all believers as disciples, and (3) with the disciples of men whose intention is to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30). Students / trainees for the ministry are indeed disciples of Christ, but will be referred to in reference to their relationship with their teacher in the church as "trainees."

⁶ This was the case with Pastor William Tennent, Sr., founder of the "Log College," whose impact on the Presbyterian Church in America, through the men he trained, elicited high praise from Archibald Alexander. Alexander, *The Log College: Biographical sketches of William Tennent and his students, together with an account of the revivals under their ministries*, First published, 1851 (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 22.

⁷ Mark 8:27-29 (NKJV, used here and elsewhere, unless otherwise noted): "Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.'"

⁸ Mark 3:14: "Then He appointed twelve, that they might **be with Him** and that He might send them out to preach" (emphasis added).

⁹ David Sinclair, in his *A Practical Guide to Biblical Discipleship*, expounds at length on the importance of personal relationship in discipleship. A sample quote: "Jesus was

relationship is that the teacher must self-consciously set a pattern for his trainees, as Jesus did when He washed His disciples' feet (Jn. 13:1-17), and that a proper goal of trainees is to imitate their teacher (Mt. 10:25). The teacher should interpret his example of teaching (Mt. 13:10-17, 36-43) and action (Jn. 13:1-17) to his trainees. This close relationship is the sphere in which both instruction and training for ministry must take place (Mk. 3:14). It is the sphere in which both encouragement (Lk. 22:28) and reproof are communicated (Mk. 8:27-33; 10:13-16, 35-45; Jn. 21:22); and the teacher should protect it from trouble due to slander (Mt. 12:2f.; 15:1-2), and develop it through appropriate praise (Mt. 12:49-50).¹⁰

Second, let us detail some of the specific responsibilities of the teacher toward the men he is training. The teacher must guard his trainees from destructive heresies, that they might in turn guard others (Mt. 5-7; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1; Mt. 23:1-12). He must pray for them (Jn. 17), show concern for their families (Mt. 8:14), and be careful not to push them too hard (Mk. 6:31). While requiring service from his trainees, the teacher must also be willing to serve them (Mk. 14:12-16; Jn. 13:1-17).

Third, while it may be assumed that the content of a good theological education will be reflected in the curriculum of a decent seminary, would we not do well to come to Scripture with the question, "What should be the method and content of theological education?" Could it be that the Scriptures address this very issue, more extensively than has often been realized, in the teaching of Christ?

The teacher must instruct his trainees, by *precept and example*, regarding a godly work ethic: the beauty of hard work (Jn. 4:34-38), and the necessity of undistractedness for labor (Jn. 21:21-22); hermeneutics: the interpretation of Scripture with reference to Christ (Lk. 24:25-27) and the triune God (Jn. 14-17), and with application to present circumstances (e.g. Mt. 15:4-5); didactic strategy: the use of proper variety in teaching (Mt. 13:52);¹¹ orthodox liturgics: the nature and importance of pure

keenly aware of the various needs that each disciple possessed. His approach to discipleship was not a pre-packaged program that did not vary with different people" (16).

¹⁰ "And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'"

¹¹ "Then He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.'"

worship (Mt. 15:8-9; John 2:13-17); personal disciplines: the importance of private prayer and fasting (Mt. 6; 26:36-45) for personal life and public ministry, and the principles of kingdom prayer in general (Lk. 11:1-13; Mt. 18:1-8; Mk. 11:20-25); pastoral friendship: the demonstration of compassion and hospitality (Mt. 15:32-39); evangelism and church discipline: the importance of seeking the lost and those who have strayed (Mt. 18:12-18), how to deal with "seekers" (Mk. 10:17-31), the great importance of evangelism for church leaders (Mt. 28:18-20), and the importance of and procedure for church discipline (Mt. 18:15-17); the pastoral care of children (Mk. 10:13-16); the importance of gentleness (Lk. 9:51-55);¹² the proper attitude toward tithes and offerings in the church of Christ (Mt. 23:23-24; Mark 12:41-44), and the proper perspective toward the physical plant of the church building (Lk. 21:5-6); the nature and importance of humility (Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 9:46-48; Lk. 22:24-27; Jn. 13:1-17; Mt. 23:5-12), and the sinfulness of self-praise and self-congratulation, even in work well done (Lk. 17:7-10);¹³ the importance of following God's directives instead of pragmatic strategies in advancing the kingdom (Mk. 8:31-33;¹⁴ cf. Mk. 1:41-45); and suffering in the ministry (Mk. 8:34-38).

It is also very beneficial for the teacher to *model* for his trainees, as Christ did, a variety of instructional styles, custom-tailored to specific situations and audiences. These approaches might include monologue ("lecture") teaching (Mt. 5-7);¹⁵ debate (Lk. 20:1-7); and dialogue,

¹² Luke 9:54-6: "And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.' And they went to another village."

¹³ Luke 17:10: "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

¹⁴ "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"

¹⁵ An article entitled "The Socratic Method," on the website for the Reformed Evangelical Pastor's College, emphasizes the usefulness of the Socratic method instead of lectures for pastoral training, in light of the "lectures" available in print from learned theologians. His point is well-taken, in light of the use of dialogical instruction by Christ, and in light of the prudence of not re-inventing the wheel. Nevertheless, it should be

including questions & answers (Jn. 14; Mark 8:27-30). He may also use a variety of homiletical techniques, including systematic exposition (Mt. 5), parabolic illustration (Mt. 13), topical treatment (Mt. 24-25), polemical contrast (Mt. 23), and repetition (Jn. 14-16).

The teacher would do well to give on-site instruction to his trainees regarding a variety of issues, including the proper interpretation of providence (Jn. 9:1-3); the imminent return of Christ as a motive for faithful service in the flock of God (Lk. 12:41-48) and hard work (Mt. 25:14-30); the importance of relying on God's provision (Lk. 12:22-34); and principles of proper compensation for ministry (Mt. 10:9-10).

In training the twelve, Christ instructed them in Old Testament and New Testament exegesis and biblical theology (knowledge of necessary original languages on the part of the disciples being assumed); the history of the people of God; topical theology (applying relevant Scripture to specific issues brought to Him); evangelism; missions; counseling (Mk. 9:33-41, etc.); apologetics (Jn. 6, etc.); and ethics—disciplines traditionally taught in an academic context—all in the context of a mentoring relationship and hands-on ministry.

Fourth, another question we might bring to the historical accounts of Jesus' ministry is this: "As supervised ministry is one explicit purpose of ministerial training (Mk. 3:14), how must this supervised ministry be carried out?" The teacher would do well to give on-site instruction to his trainees before they engage in certain types of public ministry (Mt. 10:5-15; 11:1), to review the ministry of his trainees (Mt. 17:14-20), and to give his trainees specific directions regarding how to minister once they are no longer with the teacher (Jn. 14-16; 21:15-17).

Christ's model of theological education involved a close relationship between Teacher and trainees, along with supervised ministry and all this entailed. Is the modern academic seminary model of theological education in the best position to provide for the needs implied in Christ's training? Though many professors may have developed good relationships with their students and taught them faithfully, the seminary *system* is often not set up to accommodate a *concursum* of didactic education and supervised ministry. Even when a seminary system may

noted that Christ did teach by monologue quite frequently ("The Socratic Method" [online], adapted from [an explanation of the Socratic Method](#) presented by Thomas Aquinas College, a Catholic Classical liberal arts college in Santa Paula, California [cited again 1 October 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://training-pastors.com>).

make room for, or even require, “field education,” often the “theoretical” and the “practical” training are left to different men, or different sets of men. Does this disjunction of instruction and practice in training men for the gospel ministry have biblical precedent? While the ministry of Christ to His disciples (along with the old covenant patterns of theological education) sufficiently demonstrates the propriety of one teacher instructing multiple trainees, as is often the case in modern seminaries, it does not demonstrate the *necessity* of theological education in a modern academic setting, with its general disjunction between theoretical and practical training.

Paul

The redemptive-historical situation in which men were trained for ministry in the apostolic church, of course, bears very close resemblance to the situation of the church today. They operated in the church in the new covenant era; so do we. The training of men by Paul, as must be expected, corresponds closely with Christ's training of His disciples. Before listing principles for theological education from apostolic precept and example, it may be useful to observe that with Paul, as with the examples above, theological training was pursued contemporaneously with ministry. It is not necessary to view training as terminating when a trainee commences public ministry under the supervision of his instructor. This was not the case with the disciples in John 4:2 and Matthew 10, or with Timothy in Paul's letters to him. Theological education takes place both before and after the commencement of public ministry. Thus we may derive some principles for pre-ordination theological education from Paul's post-ordination letters to Timothy and Titus. These letters provide the bulk of the principles listed below.

We may note, first, that Paul's ministry reflects Christ's. As with Christ, so with Paul, we see that it is appropriate for a leader/teacher to take the initiative in selecting trainees (Acts 16:1-3).¹⁶ The teacher must self-consciously set a pattern for his trainees, and even direct them to

¹⁶ Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 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 and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

follow it (II Tim. 3:10-11).¹⁷ It is appropriate for a leader to take along two or more men who may learn from his example (Acts 15:40-16:3; 20:4-5; see also II Tim. 2:2¹⁸). As with Christ and the old covenant examples listed above, so with Paul, we see that it is appropriate for trainees to minister to the needs of their leader, and to perform missions for him (Acts 17:14-15; 19:22; II Tim. 4:9,13,21). It is fitting for trainees to spend much time with their instructor in the context of ministry (Acts 20:4-6). The trainee must be encouraged and warned in the context of a close relationship (I Tim. 1:18-19; 4:14; II Tim. 1:4-7), warned of heresy (I Tim. 1:3-8; 4:1-5; 6:20-21), and instructed regarding which people to just plain stay away from (II Tim. 3:1-9). The teacher must pray for his trainee (II Tim. 1:3). The trainee must be taught, by precept and example, the vast importance of hard work (II Tim. 2:4-7).¹⁹ He must also be instructed in principles for public worship (I Tim. 2:8-15), and be taught, by precept and example, in prayer—even in principles for public prayer (I Tim. 2:1-2,8; Phil. 1:1, 9-11). The trainee must be instructed in contentment and dependence on God's provision (I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19), and in anticipating suffering, and the teacher must set an example of how to suffer wisely in the ministry (I Tim. 1:8; 2:3). Finally, as with Christ, so with Paul, the teacher gives his disciples specific directions regarding how to minister once they are no longer with the teacher (I – II Tim.).

The life and letters of Paul indicate clearly that the *church* is the forum in which theological education is to take place. We are so accustomed to additional institutions assuming responsibility for the task of the church; we may find it difficult to imagine pastors themselves, in addition to their other responsibilities, training men for the gospel ministry. But is this not the pattern we discover in the New Testament?

From Paul we notice, again, that men must be selected for training from the church; no man must take training for the ministry upon himself

¹⁷ “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

¹⁸ “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.”

¹⁹ II Timothy 2:6-7: “The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.”

(Acts 16:1-3; Heb. 5:1-4).²⁰ The qualifications for the office of teaching elder are manifestly moral—if men do not meet the character qualifications for teaching elder, they must not be ordained, regardless of how much official seminary education they have had (I Tim. 3:1-7). The congregation must be trained regarding the qualifications and duties of men to be selected as officers in the church (II Tim. 3:1-15; see also Acts 6:1-6). Men must be trained to anticipate their duties as officers in the church (I Tim. 3); a good way to help them do this is to grant them significant duties first, and then the office (I Tim. 3:10), and that not too quickly (I Tim. 5:22²¹). Those who aspire to or are placed in the office of teaching elder must be taught to work hard in order to make obvious progress in their public ministry of the Word (I Tim. 4:15). They must be taught to relate respectfully, gently, and patiently with those to whom they are ministering (I Tim. 5:1-2²²; II Tim. 2:23-26²³; II Tim. 4:2); and to instruct through appropriate repetition (II Tim. 2:14²⁴).

²⁰ Hebrews 5:4: “And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.”

²¹ “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.”

²² It is essential that a young trainee cultivate these virtues, that he might avoid the harshness and abrasiveness that too often accompany youth and could hinder his ministry. I Timothy 5:1: “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers”.

Now Paul resumes his explanation of how Timothy should go about his public duties, focusing on his personal and private interaction with members of the “household of God.” Again, his public duties are tied up with his personal character--the “manner” of his reproofs is as worth giving heed to as the “matter.” Timothy is to treat members of the church as family, not condescendingly, but with brotherly affection. This emphasis is consonant with the family imagery of 3:15; 4:6a (so William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46: *Pastoral Epistles* [Nelson Reference & Electronic, A Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000], 249). This is in accord with the pattern of Christ in Mark 3:31-35 (Mounce, 268). “How considerately, with what tact, what gentleness and moderation, would he deal with one who stood so close to him” (William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*. third edition? [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], 166). (From Timothy D. Cummings, “Textual-Thematic Exegetical Paper on I Timothy 4:11-5:2,” 16).

²³ But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

²⁴ II Timothy 2:14a: “Remind them of these things”.

The trainee must be reminded of the great importance of hard work in hermeneutics (II Tim. 2:15); versed regarding proper procedures in the church of Christ, concerning church discipline (I Tim. 5:20) and other practical matters (I Tim. 5:3-16); instructed regarding proper compensation for ministry (I Tim. 5:17-18); and reminded about the great importance of evangelism for the pastor (II Tim. 4:5²⁵).

In addition, it is helpful to remember that effective ministry is essentially a "conservative" ministry, in the sense that the duty of the trainee will be to pass on "the standard of sound words" entrusted to him (II Tim. 1:13-14; 2:2; cf. Jn. 14:26). His job is not to invent new doctrines, but to faithfully expound the Scriptures, remembering at the same time that the Lord may give fresh insight. As he does this for the men in his church, some of them may show promise as potential elders (teaching and ruling). He should work with these men, training them according to the principles outlined above, so that they might, if the Lord wills, be approved for office by the congregation and the elders.

Knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was largely assumed in the time of Christ and Paul. Due to the importance of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts for accurate exposition of the Word (Mt. 5:18-19; Jn. 8:58; Gal. 3:16; see II Tim. 2:15), it is good to stress the original languages. Seminary, however, is not *necessary* for one to gain appropriate familiarity with the languages.

As we might expect from the list of elder qualifications in I Timothy 3:1-7, Paul stresses the importance of sound theology, blameless life, and winsome, tender ministry for the young ordained. The same items are worth stressing for the young, pre-ordination trainee. He must continue to be fed spiritually on the Word of God (I Tim. 4:6), and must discipline himself for the purpose of godliness (I Tim. 4:7-8). To be effective, the trainee must be pure (II Tim. 2:20-22). His exemplary behavior must check those who would be tempted to despise his youthfulness (I Tim. 4:12²⁶). He must instruct the congregation regarding day-to-day living—

²⁵ "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

²⁶ Timothy's godly example is the prescribed antidote to potential contemptuous treatment due to his youth. A godly example, Mounce suggests, will cause people's contempt to appear absurd (Mounce, 257-8). Hendriksen and Adams point out that the phrase with the verb *καταφρονεῖτω* is properly translated to this effect: "Let no one think down on you" (Hendriksen, Exposition, 157. Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids:

this is good and solid *doctrine* (I Tim. 6:1-5; Titus 2:1f.). He would do well to realize that correct theology fervently enjoyed is the great foundation and motivation for (besides being the content of) effective ministry! (I Tim. 6:13-16; II Tim. 1:8-14; 2:1, 8-13). He must be directed to the sufficiency of Scripture for ministry (II Tim. 3:14-17).

It is interesting to note that in Paul's instruction of Timothy, he utilizes personal knowledge of Timothy and his personality that can only be garnered through a close relationship (I Tim. 5:23; II Tim. 1:3-7). Once again, we see the significance of a close mentoring relationship as the proper context for theological education. The sphere in which this training ought to take place is the church. Paul took Timothy with him on a church-commissioned missionary journey (Acts 16:3-4), and later gave instructions regarding his conduct in the church. Finally, it seems appropriate to note that Timothy was with Paul when he wrote many of his epistles, and the pastoral epistles are theologically laden. This implies that weighty theology (a subset of which is wisdom for dealing with practical issues; see Titus 2:1-10) is the proper substance of an aspiring pastor's "curriculum," but does not imply an academic, seminary setting for the communication of this curriculum.

Zondervan, 1975), 263. An appearance of a similar word is used in Titus 2:15. Adams renders the word in Timothy "think down;" the word in Titus "think around.") What Elihu said in Job 32:7 is reflective of the perspective of many: "I thought age should speak, And increased years should teach wisdom." And what Elihu says is certainly true; the book of Proverbs affirms this. Those who are older in the church are responsible to teach those who are younger (cf. Titus 2). Yet age is not essential to wisdom (Job 37:8), nor wisdom to age (Job 37:9). It is therefore appropriate for those who are younger to teach those who are older, provided they are gifted, called, and their wisdom is manifest in their speech and life (From Cummings, "Textual-Thematic Paper," 9).

Additional Considerations

To this point the grounds for a church-based, hands-on approach to ministerial education have been presented according to a biblical-theological pattern, moving through Scripture. Below I delineate a number of additional biblical considerations, listed more topically, that support such an approach to ministerial education.

The church: The context for the perception and development of godly character

The principles presented in the section above on the ministry of Paul indicate the preferability of training potential teaching elders in the church. According to I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 godly character is essential for an elder of Christ's church. The context of the above passages demonstrates that such character is noticed and developed in the context of the church (I Tim. 3:14-15). A man should be of good reputation among believers who know him well if he is to serve the church (I Tim. 3:1f.; Acts 6:3f.). Is it wisest to send a man to seminary when he shows progress toward such character, and leave him to the observation and encouragement of professors in the context of the lecture hall, and the care of a new church that does not know him? A man's weaknesses of character can be more effectively detected and remedied through the care of elders that know him well, than through scholarly interaction with professors in the context of academia. Interviews with my home session (some members of which had known me for over a decade) after an internship were very helpful (albeit painful) aids to my own spiritual growth.

The church: The context for the training of elders

The elders of the local church are also in the best position to judge when a man is ready for eldership. The maturity expected of a young man aspiring to be a teaching elder must be at least the same as that expected of an aspiring ruling elder. After preaching in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas returned and appointed elders in every church, apparently from among the members of each church (Acts 14:23). The same pattern is evident in Titus 1:5. Among the elders, there are some especially given to the word and teaching (I Tim. 5:17).

They may teach and preach in their home church, or may be trained in one church and then move to start another church, or to aid another church (Acts 11:25-6; Timothy).

Were a man's readiness for ministry to be assessed by his local church or presbytery, the presbytery's examination system could form the focus for a man's "academic" learning under the mentorship of his pastor/session. Areas of weakness could be targeted for special attention. Much preparation could likely be accomplished through reading and interaction, even without formal coursework.

It is the teaching elders of the church who are entrusted with the responsibility of training men for the ministry of the Word. "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" (II Tim. 2:2).

To educate a teacher of the Word, one must himself be a teacher of the Word, and it is **the church** which, in the New Testament, recognizes, administers and profits from teaching of the Word [emphasis added]. . . . Teachers will ordinarily be experienced in the pastoral and/or evangelistic ministry. The major qualification for teachers is that they be skilled in "teaching teachers" (II Tim. 2:2). Advance degrees and special scholarly competences are desirable also; but realistically, there are probably more skilled "teachers of teachers" without such competences than with them, and most Ph.D.'s are probably quite unskilled at the kind of teaching described in II B above. The best candidate for a teaching job in our community is a pastor who has trained his elders and congregation so that the work of teaching and evangelism is widely diffused throughout the congregation. Someone . . . , of course, ought to know Hebrew! A teacher such as I have described, however, will ordinarily be able to teach to students the amount of Hebrew necessary for the ministry.²⁷

If teaching elders are trained in the context of the church, under its elders, they will continually be reminded that they are a *member* of a local church. They are certainly a member, and they are merely a

²⁷ John Frame, "Proposal for a New Seminary" [online]. Originally published in *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 2:1 (Winter, 1978), 10-17. Updated 2001 [cited 18 September, 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/1978Proposal.htm, website listing articles by John Frame and Vern Poythress.

member. Their gifts, as the gifts of others, should be harnessed for the edification of the body (I Pet. 4:10-11; Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:12-31). They should not be regarded, upon installment in any given church, as *the most indispensable (professional)* member; nor, upon the rising of difficulties, as *the most dispensable (because focal)* member.

The church setting provides the man aspiring to be an elder with an important opportunity to develop friendships with people *in* the church, a pattern which should strengthen, not diminish, should he be ordained. This was an important element in the ministries of Christ (Lk. 12:1,4; Jn. 15:14-15) and Paul (Rom. 16:1-16). Though it has been reported “that 61% of pastors admit that they have few close friends,”²⁸ it is important for the pastor, following Christ and Paul, to “maintain relationships with ‘normal’ people in the church and not only with an elite club of ‘ministry peers.’”²⁹

The church: The context for the perception and development of speaking gifts

Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, has distributed to His people gifts of speaking and serving (I Peter 4:10-11; Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:7-11). It is apparent from the context of the passages listed above that these gifts are to be perceived and developed in the church. The church, not the academy, is the ideal setting for the perception, use, and development of the gifts of both speaking and serving. The elders of a man aspiring to the office of teaching elder are responsible for instructing him and helping him develop his gifts. The active use of recognized gifts within such a man’s home congregation is not only most beneficial to him, since he is exercising his gifts in their ideal context; but is highly beneficial to the church, for whose benefit the gifts are given. Were we to turn to a more church-oriented model for the development of the gifts of teaching/exhortation, would not men training for the ministry be forced to present the content of their instruction in a manner both intelligible and relevant to church members? Is not such relevancy a challenge for the recently graduated seminarian? Would there not be much blessing if

²⁸ Malcolm Webber, *SpiritBuilt Leadership*, vol. 2: Leaders (Elkhart, IN: Strategic Press, Division of Strategic Global Assistance, Inc.), 51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

ministerial training involved continuous integration of theology and practice?³⁰

History: Athens and the primacy of the intellect

The founder of the first philosophical academy—the prototypical Academy (est. c. 385 B.C.)—was Plato. Both Plato and Aristotle, founder of the Lyceum, advocated a view of education that exalted the exercise of the soul, and did not hold much practical, hands-on use of knowledge in high regard.³¹ These institutions established a pattern for

³⁰ Frame writes, "We have learned that the Spirit qualifies his ministers with the character, skills and knowledge needed for their work. We must not, however, conclude that these qualifications cannot be taught. The Spirit uses many means to bestow and enlarge his gifts to men; therefore, Scripture urges us both to "strive for" (I Cor. 12:31) and to "stir up" (II Tim. 1:6, cf. I Tim. 4:14) divine gifts. Scripture indeed assumes that the character, skills, and knowledge requisite for the ministry can be taught, but only in a distinctively "Spiritual" way ("Proposal")."

It is notable that it is to the church as the church such gifts are given, and it is to the church that the men possessing gifts for the ministry of the Word are given (Eph. 4:8-16).

³¹ Plato, Republic, Book VII: But what branch of knowledge is there, my dear Glaucon, which is of the desired nature; since all the useful arts were reckoned mean by us? Undoubtedly; and yet if music and gymnastic are excluded, and the arts are also excluded, what remains? Well, I said, there may be nothing left of our special subjects; and then we shall have to take something which is not special, but of universal application. . . . It appears to me to be a study of the kind which we are seeking, and which leads naturally to reflection, but never to have been rightly used; for the true use of it is simply to draw the soul towards being. . . . Then this is knowledge of the kind for which we are seeking, having a double use, military and philosophical; for the man of war must learn the art of number or he will not know how to array his troops, and the philosopher also, because he has to rise out of the sea of change and lay hold of true being, and therefore he must be an arithmetician. . . .

Then this is a kind of knowledge which legislation may fitly prescribe; and we must endeavour to persuade those who are prescribe to be the principal men of our State to go and learn arithmetic, not as amateurs, but they must carry on the study until they see the nature of numbers with the mind only; nor again, like merchants or retail-traders, with a view to buying or selling, but for the sake of their military use, and of the soul herself; and because this will be the easiest way for her to pass from becoming to truth and being. That is excellent, he said.

Yes, I said, and now having spoken of it, I must add how charming the science is! and in how many ways it conduces to our desired end, if pursued in the spirit of a philosopher, and not of a shopkeeper (emphases added; From Plato, Republic, Book VII. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Rendered into HTML and text by [Jon Roland](http://www.constitution.org/pla/republic.htm). Accessed at the Constitution Society, <http://www.constitution.org/pla/republic.htm>, on December 8, 2006.)

future academic institutions. There is a place for institutions of research and learning, for the exploration of the world and its history is a significant element of wisdom (I Kings 4:29-34; Eccles. 1:9-10), and the acquisition of knowledge is a significant part of the cultural mandate (Gen. 2:19). The “seminary,” however, is an “academy” with a specific end: the production of men suited for the ministry. I would suggest that, in this case, the means is not entirely suited to the end, though seminaries have historically been used to accomplish much good. While the ministry involves intellectual exercise (II Tim. 2:15), the place for intellectual development in preparation for the ministry is the church, as demonstrated above (II Tim. 2:2). The church provides an environment for the holistic development of the aspiring pastor-teacher—for his Involvement in ministry as well as his Instruction in theology.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 8, Part II: [W]e call those arts vulgar which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind. [From Part III:] This pleasure, however, is regarded differently by different persons, and varies according to the habit of individuals; the pleasure of the best man is the best, and springs from the noblest sources. It is clear then that there are branches of learning and education which we must study merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity, and these are to be valued for their own sake; whereas those kinds of knowledge which are useful in business are to be deemed necessary, and exist for the sake of other things. And therefore our fathers admitted music into education, not on the ground either of its necessity or utility, for it is not necessary, nor indeed useful in the same manner as reading and writing, which are useful in money-making, in the management of a household, in the acquisition of knowledge and in political life, nor like drawing, useful for a more correct judgment of the works of artists, nor again like gymnastic, which gives health and strength; for neither of these is to be gained from music. There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure; which is in fact evidently the reason of its introduction, this being one of the ways in which it is thought that a freeman should pass his leisure; as Homer says It is evident, then, that there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble. Whether this is of one kind only, or of more than one, and if so, what they are, and how they are to be imparted, must hereafter be determined. Thus much we are now in a position to say, that the ancients witness to us; for their opinion may be gathered from the fact that music is one of the received and traditional branches of education. Further, it is clear that children should be instructed in some useful things—for example, in reading and writing— not only for their usefulness, but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them. With a like view they may be taught drawing, not to prevent their making mistakes in their own purchases, or in order that they may not be imposed upon in the buying or selling of articles, but perhaps rather because it makes them judges of the beauty of the human form. To be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls (From Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 8, parts II-III. Trans. Benjamin Jowett, from the Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.8.eight.html>. Accessed December 8, 2006).

There may be pragmatic arguments for an academic model for ministerial education. Many men can be trained efficiently, one might argue, through such a model. Many men can pass “through the hands” of (purportedly) desirable “mentors” simultaneously. Men who anticipate working together in the ministry get to know each other this way. Such arguments must reckon with the biblical evidence for a more ecclesiastical model.

History: Emphasis on liberal arts education

Historically, emphasis has been laid on a liberal arts education as a particularly appropriate preparation for the ministry. A statement from the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is indicative of general sentiment:

21.3. It is highly reproachful to religion and dangerous to the church to entrust the preaching of the gospel to weak and ignorant men. The presbytery shall therefore license a candidate only if he has received a Bachelor of Arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from a college or university of reputable academic standing.³²

One might well ask whether a man's lack of a B.A. indicates his weakness and ignorance. Is it not rather the case that some men with B.A.'s are weak, while others without B.A.'s are strong, as well as the other way around? What if a man worked as, say, a fisherman for a number of years before being called to the ministry? Or a shepherd? He that is faithful in a few things will be faithful also in much. Does it really matter what the smaller things are? Does it not matter more how faithfully they are done? Could we not say that in some sense a man who has worked as a plumber for several years may be more equipped to deal with the needs of sheep, having had extensive interaction with people, than a man who has been in school for several years? On the other hand, a man with a liberal arts education may see historical trends more clearly, or be better equipped to reach out to college students. Of course, a liberal arts education viewed from the perspective of Scripture would be an advantage to a pastor, as would any education or experience interpreted according to Scripture. Malcolm Webber writes,

³² From The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church [online; cited 13 June, 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.opc.org/BCO/FG_XXI-XXIII.html#Chapter_XXI, the website for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

These are the unchanging ways of God: preparation and proving precede leadership.

- Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness before he [led Israel].
- Joseph spent years in prison before he ruled Egypt.
- David lived in the wilderness . . . before he . . . ruled Israel.
- John the Baptist [“lived in the deserts,” Lk. 1:80].
- Paul underwent extensive preparation before he was finally commissioned as an apostle.
- Jesus’ disciples were all personally prepared and proven by Jesus before He entrusted them with the leadership of His church.³³

History: Its influence on present thinking about theological education

In Western Europe and North America, due to the tradition outlined above, we tend to think about theological education in terms of institutions distinct from the church. In his work on building leaders, Malcolm Webber again writes,

One of the main reasons why local churches see themselves as fundamentally incapable of building leaders is because they have been trained to view leader development as necessarily involving institutions, buildings, tenured professors with big degrees . . . , accreditation, desks and dormitories, libraries containing thousands of books, etc. However, if our goal in leader development changes from scholarship to the development of the whole man, then suddenly we recognize that not only is the local church capable of building its own leaders, it is in fact, *the only place where it can properly occur!*

This is how church leaders were built in Acts – there is not a single instance of a seminary or Bible school that functions remotely from and independently of the local church. Biblically, the local church or cluster of churches is the primary unit of leader development.³⁴

³³ Webber, *SpiritBuilt Leadership*, vol. 2, 90.

³⁴ Malcolm Webber, *SpiritBuilt Leadership*, vol. 4: *Building Leaders* (Elkhart, IN: Strategic Press, Division of Strategic Global Assistance, Inc.), 39-40.

As missionaries from the west go to other countries their tendency can be to “import” their culture: music, dress, etc. Western institutionalized education has also affected the church in other parts of the world.

The following are comments from rural house church leaders in Asia:

- In the past, developing competencies was our emphasis. As a result, we made students who were full of knowledge and proud but who couldn't solve practical problems in real life.
- In the last 10 years, our leadership training has become more and more Western, following Western models of seminaries and Bible schools. As a result, the quality of our newly raised leaders has declined.
- The Western approaches to training have not been successful. Our young people finish the school with big heads but little hearts. They have much new knowledge but their character is weak.³⁵

In one Asian country, the influence of foreign ways of training has been quite negative. After a couple of years of training, young people graduate with degrees from schools that are funded and controlled by foreigners. These young people may not have planted a church in their lives, they have probably not spent time in prison for their faith, and some of them may not have even led anyone to the Lord. Yet, now they each have a degree – apparently, they're qualified. In contrast, the older leaders have planted hundreds of churches, won thousands of people to the Lord, have suffered for their faith for years in prison and have built the church movements with their own blood, sweat and tears – but, they don't have any degrees. Suddenly, who appears to be more “qualified” to lead?³⁶

History: Examples and suggestions of more holistic and/or ecclesiastical training

History is not without precedent for a more ecclesiastical model of theological education. Dr. Joseph Pipa writes about the “parsonage system,” employed, for example, by Jonathan Edwards: “[I]n Scotland the parsonage system, in which a young man would attach himself to a mature minister to study and prepare, was utilized.” Pipa goes on to describe the development of this parsonage system in America:

³⁵ Ibid., 137-8.

³⁶ Ibid., 162.

Sometimes it would be less formally organized; a young man would go and live with a minister to learn informally from him through reading and joining in pastoral labors. Oftentimes though, the arrangement was more formal, and a young man would attach himself to a pastor to read divinity. There would be a set curriculum. The candidate would read and discuss with his mentor and thus prepare for the ministry.³⁷

In light of Christ's example, it would seem that this model is well worth reviving. John Frame, who in his "Proposal for a New Seminary" refers to Gardiner Spring's 1848 work suggesting a more practical bent to theological education, summarizes the academicizing shift in ministerial training as follows:

In the early days of American Protestantism, the training of ministerial candidates was carried on by pastors of churches. A young man feeling a call of God to the ministry would associate himself with a church pastor, receive training from him, participate in the work of the parish, perhaps even live in the pastor's home. I'm not sure why, but eventually this system was felt to be inadequate. Perhaps there developed a shortage of ministers able and willing to take in theological students; perhaps as the literacy rate increased congregations demanded clergy with more formal education--a "learned ministry," as they used to say. At any rate, for some reason or other, theological training was institutionalized, and at the same time academicized. The use of the academic model was almost inevitable. In Germany, theological education was carried on through the universities, and in fact the university-approach was the only generally recognized model available for institutionalized training in any field.³⁸

Reformed Baptist Pastor Al Martin, like Frame, quotes Gardiner Spring, and then writes,

I know of no other field where [mere book study in preparation for practicing a profession] would be tolerated. Who are the chief resident surgeons in our hospitals, teaching young doctors how to cut open a man's thoracic cavity and go in and take out a cancerous lung? Who? Not the man who's been studying books on internal

³⁷Joseph A. Pipa, "Seminary Education" [online]. Originally published in The Chalcedon Report, September 2001 [cited 5 September, 2001]. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.gpts.edu/resources/resource_seminary.html, the website of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

³⁸ Frame, "Proposal."

surgery for 12 years! They are the men who have been in the operating theatre and have laid open chest after chest after chest, and have healthy patients after healthy patients as monuments of their competence. Who teaches young aspiring professional rugby players how to play? The man who has been out there and had his own head banged up in the scrum. You don't take the man who has been at the library studying all about it for 10 years! Brethren it is ridiculous! Who become the golf professionals and instruct people as to how to stroke a ball? Men who themselves have won a tournament here or there, stroking a ball. But when it comes to the ministry we have this strange notion that all that needs to be learned can be learned from books in the academic detachment of a seminary. I say it is time some of us reared back on our hind legs and said, "enough!"³⁹

A similar option to the "parsonage system," and one based on concerns such as those expressed by Martin and Frame, is the presbytery model, where a student may stay for extended periods of time with various pastors in his presbytery (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6), learning from them in their areas of expertise and serving them in their areas of need (I Kings 19:21; II Kings 3:11; Mt. 11:2; Lk. 7:18-19; 22:7-13).⁴⁰ The following excerpt is taken from the philosophy of mission statement for the Mission to Albania (PCA):

The best way to train elders and deacons is not by the Academia of the Greek school but rather, a rigorous study and work program according to the Great Master's pattern. Presbytery is to be the classroom and its teaching elders the professors. The trainees are to be intimately involved in the pastoral labors of the church. Some are

³⁹ From Martin, *Prepared to Preach* (Strathpine North, Australia: Covenanter Press, 1981), 65.

⁴⁰ The theological sub-committee of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) suggested at one point that presbyteries supplement the work of seminaries according to a divided plan—having the student attend seminary for some time and train with the presbytery for some time. Three different models were set forth, one involving 3 years at seminary and 1 with the presbytery. In the year spent with a "supervising pastor or pastors," the candidate would be given training, according to the proposed plan, in English Bible, Devotional Life, Worship, Evangelism, Missiology, Presbyterian Polity, Counseling, and Christian Education ("Guidelines for Theological Education" [online]. 1979 position paper from the 7th General Assembly in PCA Digest: Position Papers 1973-1993, ed. Paul R. Gilchrist (Atlanta, GA: Presbyterian Church in America, 1993) [cited 29 August, 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/2-561.doc>, the website for the PCA Historical Center).

to work with the university ministry and others alongside the parish medical clinic and other mercy projects. Together with elders and ministers, they are to maintain a rigorous pastoral visitation program that includes catechetical training in the homes of the parish as well as Bible and theology teachings in the schools. Along with this comes opportunities for teaching in the Sunday Schools, preaching in mission churches, leading in worship, and of course, much personal contact with their instructors and pastors. This program integrates in a very practical way in our church planting efforts, seminary instruction, and mercy ministry. After approximately 2-4 years in the internship program, some of these men will begin new church plants under close presbytery oversight.⁴¹

Holistic education

The type of ministerial training being advocated here is important because it fulfills the biblical requirements for not only an ecclesiastical, but also a full-orbed education. Beyond Instruction, the ministerial trainee needs also Imitation of his mentor; Interaction with his mentor; and Involvement by his mentor. The second two elements mentioned above, imitation and interaction, are highly relational. The second and fourth are highly practical. The second, third, and fourth are difficult to replicate in the institutional setting.

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies (I Cor. 8:1). This does not mean that having knowledge necessitates pride, or that pride is proportional to knowledge. But in a setting that emphasizes knowledge content, and in which Imitation and Involvement, and perhaps Interaction, are not stressed so much, this danger is present. Further, in a ministerial training setting that emphasizes knowledge through Instruction, one should beware of the danger on the part of the man aspiring to office of intellectualizing other aspects of church responsibility: sermons, Bible studies (to the detriment of prayer meetings?), church membership

⁴¹ From section IV, on leadership training, of the philosophy of mission for “Mission to Albania: A Reformed and Presbyterian Church Planting Effort,” at <http://www.missiontoalbania.com/Philosophy.pdf>. Online. Frontier. Accessed May 19, 2007. Were a presbytery to form the training unit for men preparing for ministry, men particularly gifted at certain aspects of the preparation, and in training teachers, might focus on preparing men in these aspects. Degrees are by no means essential. There is a difference, though often an overlap, between credentials and calling.

classes, and catechizing. Webber suggests that that we move “*from* focusing on academics *to* building the whole person.”⁴²

Steps in the right direction

In seeking reformation in our time, it is important to ascertain both ideals from Scripture, and practical steps toward such ideals. Recently steps have been made in the right direction. Some seminaries have provided either a full program of courses (Whitefield) or a significant percentage of courses (Greenville) by distance, *via* correspondence or Internet. Such distance education enables a man to remain in his local church while training for the ministry.⁴³ Malcolm Webber, in the books

⁴² Webber, vol. 4, 200.

⁴³ Paul used the means at his disposal—messengers—to send messages to various churches, and various men in need of theological and practical instruction (Timothy; Titus). Paul gave diligent attention to the means by which churches would receive his distance education (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:16). The means we have at our disposal for the quick distribution of messages are, frankly, technological. In addition, as in the case of Paul, they still basically involve communication through the written and/or spoken word, with the added benefit that it is possible at times, through videoconferencing, to enjoy the benefit of approximating interaction which is quite similar to face-to-face interaction (though of course face to face interaction is to be much preferred; II Tim. 1:4; cf. II John 12; III John 13-14). The Lord uses postal services, audio recording, Internet, and email to further His kingdom. In what circumstances might these means be appropriately used in connection with ministerial training? They must not, of course, be perceived as a suitable replacement for personal mentoring. Nevertheless, if a pastor feels that a trainee of his needs personal assistance with a certain subject, he may desire to ask the student to “hire out” for instruction in, say, Advanced Hebrew. After a man is ordained, he may desire to procure distance “continuing ed” education for particular counseling or other church situations, etc., along the lines of Paul’s pattern with Timothy.

In a sense, technologically assisted distance education involves the relationship between the organized church and the cultural mandate to subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28). Men throughout history have been utilizing and drawing out the potential of the earth and its treasures. Sometimes they have done this in conscious obedience to God, as in the case of Solomon and his construction of the temple, and in his use of Hiram’s ships for transport. Sometimes they have done this insensible of their compliance with the cultural mandate, and even in rebellion against God, as in the case of the tower of Babel and the famed ships of Tarshish (Ezek. 27:25). Regardless of the original intent of the individuals who invent, develop, design, or construct such useful technology, it really belongs to the children of God (I Cor. 3:22-23), and ought to be used for God’s purposes and the advancement of His kingdom. So Solomon used Hiram’s ships for the construction of the temple, and Paul used ships in his missionary efforts to spread the gospel (Acts 20-21). The medieval scholar and educator Cassiodorus valued machines for the purpose of scholarly work (such as a self-trimming lamp and a water-clock) (Cassiodorus Senator, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, Book One:

cited in the bibliography, has presented many helpful principles from Scripture along these lines. John Frame mentions the “street seminaries” of Chile; Knox Seminary, closely associated with Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; Francis Schaffer’s “Farel House” in Switzerland; and “seminaries associated with Spanish River Presbyterian Church in Boca Raton, FL, and Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama” (the latter two at times have offered courses through RTS).⁴⁴ Christ the Word Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Toledo, Ohio and Church of the Good Shepherd in Bloomington, Indiana together sponsor the Reformed Evangelical Pastor’s College, an institution in which men are trained under the oversight of elders in character and pastoral skills, as well as academic skills in, for instance, the biblical languages.⁴⁵ Also, I know of at least one instance in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church where a man was trained to a large extent by a couple of pastors. There has been a trend in the OPC, it seems, toward encouraging year-long internships. In a Reformed Baptist church some friends of our family attend, the pastors encourage young men aspiring to be pastors to train under them. All these are hopeful signs toward a more ecclesiastical, more holistic, more biblical, in my opinion, pattern of ministerial education.

Divine Letters, trans. Leslie Weber Jones [New York: Columbia University Press, 1946], 135). At the time of the Reformation, God marvelously used the development of the printing press to spread his Word. It was said that G.I. Williamson, an “elder statesman” of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, recommended at a recent General Assembly of the OPC the use of technology for the furtherance of the gospel. Williamson himself was involved in answering theological questions on the Internet. All this is to say that we ought to embrace the use of technology for the purpose of furthering God’s kingdom—God Himself approves of it. At the same time, however, we must be judicious with regard to how we use technology, in light of Scripture’s emphasis on personal ministerial training in an ecclesiastical context.

⁴⁴ Frame, “Proposal.”

⁴⁵ From the website for the Reformed Evangelical Pastor’s College [online; cited 18 September, 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.training-pastors.com/>.

Conclusion

The supreme question, in this and all church matters, must be, “What do the Scriptures say?” To ask this question about this and other issues, and to search the Scriptures expectantly for the answer, expecting to find that Scripture is sufficient for equipping the man of God for “every good work” (II Tim. 3:17), is to pursue reformation.

In the continuing reformation of the church, as in personal sanctification, we will never wholly “arrive” this side of glory. But when our minds are set on glory, and our actions regulated by the book from heaven and empowered by the Spirit from heaven, there is great hope for real progress in both personal sanctification and structural reformation, unto the blessing of the church.

Resources Available from the Publisher

- Cummings, Tim. *Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern*.
- Davis, Andrew. *Written on Your Heart: An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*.
- Elliot, Michael (Ed.). *Bible Acrostic: An Aid to Memorizing the Content of Every Chapter of the Bible*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Biblical Romance: What Does the Bible Say About Courtship & Betrothal?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Canon of Scripture, Volume 1: Biblical Presuppositions*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Church Membership: Is It Biblical?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *December 25 Jewish Style: The Ancient Jewish Celebration Anticipating the Birth of Christ*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Dressed Up for Church: A Contrarian Rag on Appropriate Clothing*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Feed My Lambs: Biblical Guidelines for Parents to Determine if Their Children are Ready for Communion*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Flaw of Natural Law*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Getting Christians Back Into Politics*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Glory and Coverings: A Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *An Hour of Prayer: A Practical Guide to 12 Kinds of Prayer*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *How to Deal with Objections to Inerrancy*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Is the Death Penalty Just?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Leader Development: A Mentoring Checklist for Sons and Young Men*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Mature Daughters: A Mentoring Checklist for Daughters and Young Women*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Problem of Evil: A Dialogue*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Public Assembly: The Biblical Call to Faithful Attendance at Public Worship*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Ransom Paid: Does the Bible Limit the Atonement?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Ruins of Athens: The Curse of the Athenian Model of Education*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Seeing History with New Eyes: A Guide to Teaching Providential History*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Seven Biblical Principles that Call for Infant Baptism*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Sunday as a First-Day Sabbath*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Torture: A Biblical Critique*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Universal Suffrage: A History and Analysis of Voting in the Church and Society*.
- Kayser, Phillip, & Bubeck, Mark. *Prayers for Spiritual Warfare*.
- Kayser, Phillip, & Pickering, Wilbur. *Has God Indeed Said?: The Preservation of the Text of the New Testament*.
- Rose, Ben Lacy. *Baptism by Sprinkling*.

Visit www.biblicalblueprints.org for additional resources.

Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern

Tim Cummings

According to a Barna poll, 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave in the first five years. Perhaps there is a better way to train ministers. Scripture indicates clearly that the church is the forum in which theological education is to take place. We are so accustomed to additional institutions assuming responsibility for various tasks of the church, we may find it difficult to imagine pastors themselves training men for the gospel ministry. But is this not the pattern we discover in Scripture?

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