

The Congregation's Role in Raising Church Leaders

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Text: Acts 18:18-28

CABU Leadership Conference 2024 - Session 19

Suggested Lesson Plan:

1. Opening (5 mins)

- Begin with the Aquila/Priscilla and Apollos story from Acts 18
- Ask: "What stands out to you in this mentoring relationship?"

2. Small Group Case Studies (10 mins) (Divide the class into groups of 3-4)

Give each group a different scenario:

- A passionate 25-year-old wants to lead worship
- A quiet but faithful member shows teaching gifts
- A new convert is eager to start serving in ministry programs

Groups discuss: "How would your congregation currently handle this situation? How should they?"

- What emerging leaders do you see in your church?
- What gifts have others spotted in you?
- What barriers exist in your church for developing leaders?

3. Scripture Mining (10 mins)

- Groups examine different passages:
 - 1 Timothy 4:12-16
 - 2 Timothy 2:2
 - Romans 16:3-5
- **Task:** "Find specific principles for leadership development"

4. Sharing the Findings (10 mins)

- Each group shares the barriers that they discovered to developing leaders.
- Each group shares the principles they discovered for leadership development.

5. Suggestions for how to personally participate in raising leaders (From Teacher's Notes)

6. End with prayer for emerging leaders

OPENER

Picture a young man in your congregation—passionate about scripture, eager to serve, filled with fresh ideas and energy. Now imagine your church turning him away simply because he's "too young." Sadly, this isn't just a hypothetical scenario. In many churches across Zambia, potential leaders are being pushed aside, their gifts untapped, and their calling questioned.

ILLUSTRATION: A church that refused to vote for one of their own as their pastor because he was "too young."

But is this what we see in the early church? In Acts 18, we discover a radically different approach. Two ordinary believers, Aquila and Priscilla, take the gifted Apollos under their wing. They don't view his potential as a threat or dismiss him for his youth or inexperience. Instead, they invest in him, mentor him, and help shape him into one of the early church's most powerful voices.

This raises a crucial question for us today: Are we following this biblical model? Are we, as a congregation, actively participating in raising up the next generation of church leaders? Or have we fallen into the trap of viewing leadership development as solely the pastor's responsibility?

The truth is, God's design for raising church leaders isn't a top-down system—it's a body of believers working together, each playing their vital role in identifying, affirming, and nurturing the leaders God is calling from within our midst. Today, we'll explore how every member of our congregation can participate in this sacred task of developing the leaders who will guide Christ's church into the future.

INTRODUCTION

God uses the entire congregation to develop and support church leadership

The congregation plays a vital role in raising leaders within the church. This responsibility is rooted in the biblical model of the church as a body of believers working together to grow in Christ and fulfill His mission.

The church in Africa often views those with eager desire, talent, or ability as a threat. We frequently push them away or discourage them by telling them they are too young!

Developing leaders within a ministry takes intentional effort and a long-term vision. It involves identifying individuals who possess a love for Jesus, the character of Jesus, and the potential to be trained for a specific role. This requires deliberate effort and a significant investment of time.

Numbers or budgets cannot measure the success of a ministry. Instead, it is determined by the number of men and women who are equipped and empowered to become leaders for the sake of Christ. We must cultivate a culture that provides people with opportunities to grow in their faith, obedience to Christ, and utilization of the gifts and skills God has bestowed upon them.

Healthy churches and ministries must have a vision for identifying and developing leaders within the congregation. Some of these leaders may eventually move on to serve Christ's church in other locations. However, this should not be viewed as a failure or loss, as they further God's mission.

I. The Biblical Foundation of Congregational Responsibility.

Suggested Resource: The Church - The Gospel Made Visible by Mark Dever (Book Giveaway)

A. Congregation is Responsible:

The congregation identifies, affirms, and holds potential leaders accountable. Leaders are raised from within the church, where their character, gifting, and service are observed over time.

“Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...” (1 Timothy 3:2-7).

“For we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25) – emphasizing mutual accountability within the church.

B. Congregation Affirms Giftedness:

The church body plays a role in recognizing God-given abilities and callings in individuals. This is often done through prayer, discipleship, and shared ministry experiences.

“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Timothy 4:14).

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).

C. Congregation Disciples and Trains:

It is vitally important that the congregation disciples potential leaders. This includes teaching sound doctrine, modeling godly behavior, and providing service and leadership development opportunities.

“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 1:5-6).

D. Congregation Supports and Sends:

The congregation supports leaders through prayer, encouragement, and resources, particularly when they are sent to ministry, such as church planting or mission work.

“Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:3).

“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 1:5-6).

E. Congregation Guards the Gospel:

The church is tasked with ensuring that its leaders uphold the truth of the gospel. By maintaining a collective commitment to biblical teaching, the congregation helps cultivate leaders who faithfully steward God's Word.

“If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:9).

“Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 1:3).

Leadership development is not solely the responsibility of pastors or elders but a community effort in which every church member participates. This approach ensures that leaders are grounded in the life and mission of the local church.

II. Power of Lay Mentorship

A. The Aquila & Priscilla Model (Acts 18:26)

1. Identifying Potential Leaders
 - They recognized Apollos's gifts
 - They noted both his strengths and areas for growth
2. Private Discipleship
 - "Took him aside" - personal attention - caring discipleship.
 - A humble approach to correction - they were not critical in a mocking, arrogant sense but rather were concerned for Apollos himself!
 - Focused on doctrinal accuracy

B. Characteristics of Effective Lay Mentors

1. Spiritual Maturity - it is vitally important that you, as a member of your church, strive to grow into maturity. This maturity means that
 - Well-grounded in Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15)
 - Living exemplary lives (1 Timothy 4:12)
2. Willingness to Serve—We need church members who understand their role in the church's purpose and are willing to step up and help future leaders grow!
 - Opening homes (1 Corinthians 16:19)
 - Giving time and resources
 - Long-term commitment to the church

III. Practical Support for Emerging Leaders

A. Meet Physical Needs

1. Provision of Resources

- Housing (Acts 18:3)
- Employment opportunities: If you are a business person, how can you leverage your business for the church's mission? Can you provide tent-making opportunities for a church planter or missionary in your area?
- Meeting spaces - open your home for a small group study. Encourage the upcoming leader, not by critiquing him constantly, but by offering him encouragement and helpful feedback.

2. Biblical Precedent

- The early church shared resources (Acts 4:32-35)
- Paul's tentmaking partnership (Acts 18:3)

B. Create Growth Environments

1. Learning Opportunities

- Home Bible Studies, Small Groups.
- Church plants that begin in a home (Romans 16:3-5)
- Teaching sessions - provide opportunities for the upcoming leader to minister the word. Be a cheerleader, supporting this effort. Engage and learn. Provide positive and critical feedback lovingly.
- Ministry practice - show up! Take notes, participate in discussions.

2. Supportive Community

- Encouragement for young leaders (2 Timothy 4:19). Encourage, encourage, encourage!

“Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he’ll do it without consulting you or me.” This was the statement heard at a late 1700s church conference where a young minister named William Carey stood to ask a question as to why the church did not make more of an effort to share the Gospel in foreign lands.¹ This is often attributed to **John Ryland Sr.**, a prominent Baptist minister in England.

- Protection from burnout: Be protective and guard them. Some may be overeager about the work and thus burn out or become discouraged.

¹ <https://heraldsofhope.org/blog/young-man-sit-down/>

- Accountability relationships: Encourage these upcoming leaders and invite them into your home. Show care and concern for them and pray for them. Develop relationships for the sake of accountability. Take a leader under your wing and work alongside him in a ministry, providing guidance and opportunities.

V. Practical Application for Today's Church

A. Creating a Leadership Development Culture

1. Intentional Mentoring

- Pairing mature believers with emerging leaders
- Regular discipleship meetings - give feedback on sermons and studies that are taught.
- Skills transfer - Deposit your skills into someone else to invest that skill into advancing the gospel.

2. Resource Allocation

- Training budgets: Allocate a line in the church's annual budget for training opportunities for upcoming leaders and all church members.
- Ministry tools - acquire theological and ministry resources and be sure they get into the hands of leaders. Purchase books and give them to the upcoming leaders in your church.
- Educational support: Include funds in your budget to sponsor members for theological and ministry training and to support a pastoral internship program.

B. Supporting Current Leaders

1. Practical Support

- Prayer support - **Ephesians 6:19** and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,
- Physical needs - 1 **Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
- Ministry assistance - go and help a church planter. Walk and work beside a ministry leader.

2. Long-term Development

- Continuing education
- Ministry sabbaticals
- Professional development

Conclusion

1. Every Member's Responsibility
 - Leadership development is not just for church staff
 - All members can contribute to raising leaders
2. Long-term Investment
 - Leadership development takes time
 - Requires patience and persistence
 - Results in stronger churches

Discussion Questions

1. How can our congregation better support emerging leaders?
2. What gifts do we have that could be used to mentor others?
3. What practical steps can we take to create a leadership development culture?
4. How can we identify potential leaders in our congregation?

Action Points

1. Create a mentorship program pairing experienced members with emerging leaders
2. Evaluate current support systems for church leaders
3. Develop a resource list for leadership development
4. Schedule regular leadership training sessions
5. Create opportunities for practical ministry experience

Key Scriptures for Further Study

- Acts 18:18-28 - Aquila & Priscilla mentoring Apollos
- 2 Timothy 2:2 - Passing on teaching to faithful people
- 1 Timothy 4:12-16 - Instructions for young leaders
- Romans 16:3-5 - Church in the home
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 - Diversity of gifts
- Ephesians 4:11-16 - Equipping the saints for ministry