

***FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION
THROUGH AN APOSTOLIC MODEL
OF MINISTRY TRAINING***

Brian Borgman, Pastor
Grace Community Church
Minden, NV

INTRODUCTION

Being a recent seminary graduate (May 93) I am well aware of the winds of change which are blowing over seminary campuses. This cry for change is not new by any means. R.L. Dabney attacked the cry for change in ministry standards back in 1883, he wrote, "We have, then, the battle to fight over again for the utility of thorough education, and a knowledge of the "dead languages" to the pastor."¹ B.B. Warfield also fought the same battle, saying in 1909, "When we satisfy ourselves with a less comprehensive and thorough theological training, we are only condemning ourselves to a less qualified ministry."² To say that a revolution (an old one at that) is occurring in the seminary world is not an understatement, this revolution has in fact made the cover of *Christianity Today*.³ The cover article states of the experts (?) "They see churches being buffeted by cultural trends, while seminaries persist in graduating conversant in Greek, Hebrew, and classical theology, but not acculturated to ministry in post-Christian America."⁴ Some of the change is good, to be sure, but other aspects appear to me to devalue the importance of many foundational and even structural necessities for pastoral ministry.⁵

I believe strongly in the necessity of a thoroughly educated ministry. However, what if one is not pleased with the direction of the seminary revolution? What if one is concerned about fulfilling the Great Commission and yet is hesitant about calling a seminary grad to come and fit in theologically and methodologically? What if time is short, the vision is fresh and the field ready for harvest? I would like to propose an

alternative to seminary education for training men for the ministry. It is, I believe, apostolic, and thus Biblical. I am not writing as a theorist (already too many of those reshaping seminary education), but rather I write as a beginning practitioner.

Let me say, I am not opposed to seminary education at all. There is a vital need for higher Christian education. In fact, I have gratitude down to my socks for my seminary education and my seminary professors. Nevertheless, I am ministering in a certain context which I believe demands an alternative. This model would work if a church was located in a seminary town or not. These really are concepts that are applicable to a multitude of situations. Therefore, I write from our unique setting and am not proposing wholesale usage by every pastor.

Grace Community Church was planted in March 1993, although I had been making contacts and developing a core group for one year prior. In our vision, we see Grace Community Church impacting northern Nevada with the gospel of grace through giving birth to other churches. This is my passion: to reflect the glory of God and extend His kingdom into Nevada (and abroad) through new churches! The vision is in my head, communicated to our people, and on paper. Everything on paper was fine *until* I started thinking of the logistics of the whole scheme. About that time God brought somebody into my life and ministry that has transformed my thinking. As we have talked, prayed, studied and grown together, God has brought us into a unity of mind, and fruit of this relationship and our thoughts is the basis for this paper. What you are about to read is what we are doing based on 2 Tim. 2:2 in light of our ministry context.

I. AN APOSTOLIC MODEL FOR MINISTRY TRAINING

Paul commands Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:2, "And what you have heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, these things entrust to trustworthy men, such as shall be able to also teach others" (own translation). Paul in his final epistle is giving Timothy some final words of exhortation. And this little gem is couched in the midst of other great "pastoral" words of wisdom. Paul knew he would be off the scene soon, and he wanted to secure, as far as it was humanly possible, the continuance of the gospel ministry, and so here he gives Timothy the command.

The relative pronoun ὅα gathers up all of Paul's teaching which Timothy had heard over the years. Paul strengthens the content of his teaching with the prepositional phrase διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, which at first glance might seem to read "through many witnesses," as if Timothy had learned Paul's teaching indirectly. However this is not the case. Not only do we know for certain that Timothy travelled extensively with Paul,⁶ we also know that he was included by Paul in the writing of a number of epistles.⁷ Furthermore, he is constantly referred to by Paul in terms of co-laborer.⁸ Timothy was indeed steeped in Paul's teaching, having sat under Paul's teaching, laboring with him in ministry, not to mention having received two personal letters from the Apostle. As a matter of fact, Paul in 2 Tim. 1:13 states, "Hold the pattern of sound words, *which from me you have heard...*" It is better to understand the preposition διὰ with the genitive as expressing "environment, attendant circumstances."⁹ In fact, Moule notes that perhaps the preposition here should be understood as "supported by many witnesses."¹⁰

The emphasis upon the witnesses is probably designed by Paul to increase the responsibility of the task. These witnesses, possibly present at his ordination (1 Tim. 4:14), know that Timothy has been entrusted with the gospel ministry, and they know Paul's doctrine, thus they will hold Timothy accountable.

Paul again summarizes his doctrine with ταῦτα "these things." It is not unclear that Paul is lumping together other terms he has used for his teaching under this generic demonstrative pronoun.¹¹ Here, however, Timothy is commanded to entrust "these things" to faithful men. First, Paul uses the aorist middle imperative of παρατιθημι. The aorist imperative may denote urgency, but beyond that it is unwise and unwarranted to make too much of the tense with the mood.¹² Παρατιθημι in the middle voice is used in the sense of entrusting or giving over something to someone for safe-keeping or transmission.¹³ The recipients of this trust¹⁴ were to be πιστοῖς ἄνθρωποις "faithful men." This designation is more than just "believing" men, that is, Christians. Rather, the men who are to receive this trust from Timothy are to be characterized by faithfulness and trustworthiness, they are to be reliable and dependable. Paul considered himself faithful (1 Tim. 1:12), he also must have considered Timothy faithful. Now Timothy is to search for other men who have this quality. On this point, Knight says, "This point is important because there are those who are in opposition to the truth (v. 25), who will turn away from the truth and not endure sound doctrine (4:3-4). Furthermore, there are leaders who will oppose the truth (3:8) and who go astray from the truth (2:18). In such a setting, it is imperative that those to whom the teachings of the apostle are entrusted (to

pass them on to others) be "faithful." Faithfulness negatively consists in their not losing, neglecting, ignoring, or falsifying (like the false teachers mentioned in this letter) what Paul has said, and positively consists of their "handling accurately the word of truth" (2:15)."¹⁵

Paul expresses another qualification for these trustees (i.e. those entrusted with the gospel deposit), they must be "of such a sort as shall be competent to teach others also." The indefinite relative pronoun οἵτινες may well be qualitative, "indicating that persons belong to a certain class. ...to emphasize a characteristic quality, by which a preceding statement is to be confirmed."¹⁶ The next additional quality is that they be ἱκανοὶ, that is, "fit, appropriate, competent, qualified, able."¹⁷ There are many faithful men in the church who may not be mentally or intellectually competent to be trustees who in turn teach others. Paul desires Timothy to find faithful and competent men who can be in leadership (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9), and reproduce and promote the apostolic deposit in others. The "others" (ἄλλοι) refer to the masses who need to be taught, but also those who fit the previous bill and can repeat the same pattern.

The pattern is easily visualized.

PAUL <apostolic deposit>>> TIMOTHY <apostolic deposit>>>
FAITHFUL/COMPETENT MEN <apostolic deposit>>> OTHERS

In this one verse of Scripture, we see an important truth on training men for ministry. Listen to Stott as he sums up this text, "Here, then, are the four stages in the handing on of the truth, which Paul envisages: from Christ to Paul, from Paul to

Timothy, from Timothy to 'faithful men,' and from 'faithful men' to 'others also.' *This is true apostolic succession.*"¹⁸ If this is the apostolic pattern, taken directly from the pastoral epistles (the closest thing we have to a ministerial manual in the NT), then those of us in pastoral ministry must take this seriously! Homer Kent expresses well the responsibility of the pastor from this text, "Every servant of God, while not neglecting the whole congregation, should endeavor to develop leaders who will be qualified and competent to carry the gospel effectively to others."¹⁹

What a 2 Tim. 2:2 model of ministry training requires is a pastor who has a desire to reproduce himself, his theology, his pastoral philosophy into another faithful and competent man (a trustee), who shares the same vision for ministry. This model demands mentoring, teaching, friendship, accountability, and time! In my thinking, it is the answer to the dilemma that I made mention of earlier. Perhaps more specific reasons need to be given. Again, remember, I am writing from our own ministry needs, situation, and perspective.

II. THE NEED FOR THIS TYPE OF TRAINING

As I stated earlier, I am currently ministering in Nevada and part of our vision is to plant other churches in northern Nevada which promote and advance the gospel of grace and our distinctives. To do this, we need capable men to plant and lead new churches, under our direction and co-laboring efforts. If we are to send young men off to seminary, and wait for them to return, or send out letters of inquiry to seminaries,

searching for current students, we will face a number of problems. The first problem is time. Waiting for a student to complete seminary could take up to three years. The other scenario would be to get a student who is about to graduate. This too has its problems. Which brings us to the second problem, namely finances. For a student to get through seminary (an M.Div.) will cost circa \$15,000. This is too much money for the church and the individual! Furthermore, to hire a graduate, one would have to supply a salary, which also would not be feasible for a new church like us. I also have an objection to spending around \$200 per credit hour for the multitude of superfluous classes required in seminary.

A 2 Timothy 2:2 approach to training for ministry would not only avoid the above mentioned difficulties, it would also have some tremendous benefits. The first benefit is that in entrusting the apostolic deposit to other faithful and competent men, the pastor would be able to form and shape his trustee with his own special ministerial and theological distinctives. Secondly, it enables the trustee to be given ministerial responsibilities, by which he can be evaluated. This is something that cannot be done with a seminary graduate, you must take his word and the words of others on his ministerial giftedness via a resume, which may or may not fit your needs. Thirdly, as the trustee begins to show interest and giftedness (1 Tim. 3:1), he can begin a learning/training program, which can also be monitored and evaluated by the pastor. In fact, the trustee can even begin doing the work of the ministry *while* studying under his pastor's direction. These benefits are rarely enjoyed during seminary, by neither pastor

nor candidate!

A SPECIFIC MODEL FOR 2 TIMOTHY 2:2 TRAINING

My personal distinctives include being a thorough-going Calvinist as well as a Christian hedonist. These distinctives shape the foundation of our church. We not only have a radically Theo-centric philosophy of ministry, we place a premium on the expository preaching of the Word of God. The Word is the hub for every other ministry in our body. When it comes to training for the ministry, we concur whole-heartedly with B.B. Warfield, "What we need in our pulpits is scholar-saints become preachers."²⁰

As a result of our theology and philosophy of ministry, we have designed the following 2 Timothy 2:2 model for training:

The trustee shall work in conjunction with the pastor in the following areas, with the pastor serving as mentor and teacher:

- 1) **A knowledge of the Greek New Testament.** This is accomplished through learning Greek grammar in two 12 week quarters (using Kubo's A Beginner's New Testament Greek Grammar). Then having another 12 week quarter learning syntax, using Porter's Idioms of the Greek New Testament. After grammar and syntax are complete, the trustee begins to learn exegesis by actually exegeting passages of Scripture with the Pastor (these passages, books, etc., will be texts that the pastor is preaching or

teaching on).

- 2) **A knowledge of the Bible as whole.** This is accomplished through three ways: (1) The pastor and trustee go through Fuller's Unity of the Bible together. (2) The pastor and trustee go through a book on hermeneutics together (probably Grant Osborne's The Hermeneutical Spiral). (3) The trustee goes through OT and NT survey, under the pastor's direction, utilizing some of the audio courses offered through various seminaries.
- 3) **A knowledge of pastoral theology.** This is accomplished through three main avenues: (1) the trustee and pastor go on pastoral visitation and evangelism calls together; the trustee is given a position of leadership where he can exercise his gifts within a ministry context; and there is discussion about pastoral aspects together. (2) The trustee will listen to and report on a series of lectures on pastoral theology (we have chosen Albert Martin of Trinity Baptist Church in NJ. He is a practicing Reformed pastor, and his series of lectures given at the Trinity Ministerial Academy is thorough). (3) Certain books, reflecting our perspective on pastoral ministry will be required reading.
- 4) **A knowledge of theology.** This is accomplished through assigned reading and discussion. Calvin's Institutes, Jonathan Edwards, and other good reformed theologies will be the main diet.
- 5) **Actual ministry.** After a period of time, the trustee is given the

opportunity to go to one of the targeted areas (right now we have 2 main targeted areas) to plant a daughter church. The target area is close enough for continued contact, mentoring and help by the mother church and pastor.

This obviously requires time on the part of both the pastor and trustee, approximately 8 hours per week. In our situation, the trustee is a businessman who is an entrepreneur. Many pastors may look at that and say, "I don't have that kind of time!" My response is that we cannot afford to avoid this pleasurable responsibility! If we want to see an expanding ministry, a ministry which promotes the truths which are precious to us, a ministry which fulfills the Great Commission (like church planting does!), then we must pray for and seek after this kind of pastor-trustee relationship.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This type of 2 Tim. 2:2 ministry can work in conjunction with a seminary. But the bottom line, seminary or not, it is incumbent on us as pastors to reproduce ourselves in others who can in turn do the same! May God raise up men who desire to be trustees and pastors who desire to **invest** the time and energy, for the advancement of our King's glorious Kingdom and the everlasting gospel of grace!

- 1.R.L. Dabney, Discussion of Robert Lewis Dabney, Volume Two (Banner of Truth reprint 1982), pg. 659.
- 2.B.B. Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield Vol. One (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), pg. 373.
- 3.*Christianity Today*, Oct. 24, 1994, "Re-Engineering the Seminary" (74-78).
- 4.CT, 74.
- 5.Just a thought about the CT quote: Cultural trends change rapidly. If we want to seriously make ministry obsolete than we should change curriculum to fit the cultural trends so that it is outdated within 5-10 years because of changing trends. The foundational and structural aspects of ministry (e.g, Greek, Hebrew and Classical Theology) preparation are really trans-cultural and unchanging.
- 6.see Acts 16:1ff. for the start of Timothy's travels with Paul.
- 7.2 Cor.; Phil.; Col.; 1 Thess.; 2 Thess.; Philemon.
- 8.E.g., in Rom. 16:21 Paul refers to Timothy as a συνεργός.
- 9.C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge University Press, 1953), pg. 57.
- 10.Ibid.
- 11.see 1 Tim. 4:6, 15.
- 12.See Stanley Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament (Sheffield, 1992), pps. 53-54, 224-226; and Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, pps. 20-21, 135-137.
- 13.Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (University of Chicago Press, 1957), pg. 628.
- 14.I am using "trust" here in the sense of something which has been committed to someone's (a trustee) custody or charge for care and safe keeping.
- 15.George W. Knight III, New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles (Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1992), pg. 391.
- 16.Arndt and Gingrich, 591.
- 17.Arndt and Gingrich, 375.

18. John R.W. Stott, Guard the Gospel (IVP, 1973), pg. 53. Italics are mine.

19. Homer Kent, Jr. The Pastoral Epistles (Moody, 1958, 1982), pg. 259.

20. B.B. Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. 1, pg. 378.