

Biblical Successes in Training Successors

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek . . . Him would Paul have to go forth with him”
(Acts 16:1-3).

Successful men in the Bible trained successors to carry on after them. Moses trained Joshua as a successor. Whom did Joshua train? (He did not train anyone and all of Israel suffered.) Elijah trained Elisha. Jesus trained the twelve apostles over a period of three years. The Apostle Paul trained Timothy. None of these men were threatened by the potential of their successors.

The leaders we develop must produce another generation of leaders. Otherwise, the leadership building process stops. We who are involved in Christian leadership have a responsibility to plan for the future of the church. We should do our best to train successors to take over when we move on.

Jesus is a great example. He knew His purpose when He came to the earth. He came to seek and to save the lost, and to build His church. To ensure success, Jesus spent time training His successors. He left twelve qualified successors to carry on the vital tasks that He had started. Jesus knew that His work would not fail. Why? He had trained the next generation of leaders. From the beginning, Jesus told these leaders that He would not always be with them. He trained the most successful leadership team of all times. As a result, once their Leader departed, they continued to experience revival and growth as they followed His example by effectively training future leaders. Their success after Jesus departed proves that leadership can be passed on by investing in a plan for succession. Good stewardship includes preparing for the time when a leader will no longer lead.

The challenge of today’s worldwide church is to develop leaders who are capable, anointed and hungry for the revival and church growth that God has promised in the end-time. Each leader needs to ensure that he has trained a successor.

John Maxwell says, “A leader who produces other leaders multiplies his influence.” He claims, “True success comes only when every generation continues to develop the next generation.”
(*Developing the Leaders Around You*)

A word of caution, when training the next generation of leaders, do not “put all of your eggs in one basket.” This means you should not just train one person to take your place (often called the Timothy Principle). You should train several leaders and place them in key leadership roles (known as the Key Man Strategy). If you train only one person to take your place, what will happen if for some reason he is not able to replace you?

One secret to successful leadership is to hold positions lightly. The harder we hang on to a position, the more difficult it becomes to release it at the appropriate time.

As leaders, we should acknowledge that the Lord has allowed us to fill a leadership role. He does not give us a responsibility in the kingdom to exalt and/or lift us up.

God expects us to humbly serve His people. He also expects us to relinquish our responsibility to another in His timing. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalms 75:6-7).

John the Baptist enjoyed a fantastic response to his leadership and ministry. However, when Jesus came on the scene, John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Elijah is a good example of a leader that transitioned well. He trained Elisha, reproduced himself in him, and left him his mantle of leadership. God added a double portion of his anointing. (See 2 Kings 2:8-15.)

The Apostle Paul spent a considerable amount of time training the leadership in Ephesus. When he felt it was the Lord's will to leave, his followers objected. "When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell . . . but I will return to you, if God will" (Acts 18:20-21). What can be learned from this?



A leader knows when to move on.



A leader knows when to say, "No."



A leader must follow God's direction, even when the people want him to stay.



A leader must surrender to the will of God on a daily basis.

Study Questions

1. Why should leaders be trained for the next generation? _____

2. Who built the most successful leadership team of all time? _____

3. How was this accomplished? _____

4. What is the challenge facing the worldwide church? _____

5. According to John Maxwell, when does true success come? _____

6. Why would it be wise to train more than one leader to assume your role? _____

7. What does Jesus expect from our leadership? _____

8. Provide a biblical example of someone who trained a successor. (Explain.) _____

9. What does the Apostle Paul teach us about leadership in Acts 18:20-21? _____

Additional Notes