



The Step Plan

Jesus knew His ministry on earth had a time limit. He knew the disciples would have to learn fast to be able to build His church when He had left them. As we look through the Gospels we see examples of His training and teaching. His stated aim was that their ministry should be as fruitful as His, and that the disciples would do even greater things than He had done. (Jn 14:12)

We also need to train our members quickly so that they may be released into fuller ministries. The 'Step Plan' helps leaders encourage individuals to grow in faith and ministry. As a start point, select three of your regular and committed church members. Working together with them individually go through the following three steps.

1. Looking back, jot down their church 'CV'. What experiences have they had? What gifts have they been given? How has God used them so far? You should consider the complete range of spiritual growth, mission and ministry. There is a range of gift sheets available which may help with this.

2. Think and pray through what the next step or steps for each of them might be, making sure that you don't constrain your thinking by current church structures. What might God be calling them to do? What opportunities are there for them to broaden their Christian experience?

3. Write down a specific and individual plan that will provide the training and support necessary to move forwards to take that next step. This may well mean that they need to move on from their current roles, and will require a plan to replace them. (This in turn may be an excellent next step for another member of the church!) One of the reasons for starting with just three members is that it is absolutely vital that they receive the necessary support and encouragement they need to make the change.



Releasing just three church members into deeper ministries can have untold effect. They may be able to take on work that previously had consumed your time, or work which had been neglected. This may spark others into coming forward to seek new ways to serve the Lord. Taking the time to work with people individually is both affirming for them and is often greatly appreciated.



Review the action plan developed after six months. At that meeting, check progress and identify any further training or support that is required. After a further six months, they may be ready to go through the whole three-stage process again.

Finally, think about how you might expand this to involve a greater number of church members. But start small! Remember that Jesus sent out the twelve on a training mission before sending out another seventy-two disciples

Some may argue that the step plan is too formal, and too structured a plan. The formality and structure are simply there to help ensure that there is a process that moves through all the necessary stages. Only completing the first stage of a process of identifying the gifts without moving onto offer ministries and training can frustrate individuals, like a child who has been given a wonderful new toy for Christmas, but will need to wait for the batteries to enable him to use it.

ACTION POINTER :Identify four or five people who you perceive to be the most appropriate to start the plan with. If you don't already review their ministry, fix up some dates with them to begin the process...



Coaching & Mentoring

Just as we can see ourselves as being spirit, mind and body, so we can see personal development as being spiritual growth, development of Christian understanding and values, and the working out of this in practical ministry. In each case, the leader has the opportunity to play a role enabling interaction between the individual and the Holy Spirit.

Area	Christian development	Leaders Role
Spirit	Spiritual growth	Encourages, provides opportunities to experience different traditions
Mind	Understanding and Values	Preaching and teaching, mentoring
Body	Ministry experience	Help understanding gifts, provision of ministry opportunity, coaching,

In this area we focus on two skills, Coaching and Mentoring. To some, the terms may sound alien to the Christian context, yet as we explore their definition, we see that they are entirely biblical.

Mentoring

Mentoring is the process of gaining wisdom from, and tapping into the experience of, others. We all have mentors, whether we call them that or not - heroes, people we seek to emulate, people we've learned from. Viv Thomas writes of the importance of mentors in his book, *Future Leader*,

"When I was leading a church it was deeply frustrating to have so little effect on the people I was called to influence and help. The thirty minutes they spent listening to me preach was quickly forgotten. The thoughts triggered in the message did not even seem to reach the car park. It seemed the greatest influence over most of my congregation was held by my family and friends, not their pastor. Their spiritual formation took place primarily in interaction with those close to them; people who helped, understood and listened over a long period of time, or who entered their lives at crucial moments.

As it is with congregations, so it is with leaders. The conditions needed to grown Christians are the same as those needed to grow leaders of Christians. Leaders are in desperate need of friends and mentors, people who will direct us towards God and show us the way. One good and able mentor is worth a hundred consultants, a thousand motivational or "how to" seminars and only God knows how many sermons. Soul drought, which is the experience of many leaders, is often related to a lack of mentoring."

As leaders we may become mentors to church members or team members. We also need to recognise our need for our own mentors. For it is in the experience of relating to those who give us their time and wise counsel, that we can best relate to others as mentors..

Coaching

Whilst mentoring focuses on the values and whole person growth, coaching is much more task oriented. Coaching is the provision of the one to one help necessary for an individual to use their gifts and talents in the ministry of the church. This one to one help, or coaching, is best provided as part of a structured plan, such as the Step Plan. In this way there is an expectation that coaching will happen, there is a discussion between coach and church member on where the coaching is required, and a proactive identification of possible ways that the coaching can be delivered. Here are five characteristics of successful coaching.

- ~ Ask questions rather than tell. There is a clear role for showing people clearly what to do, particularly with very simple clerical or repetitive tasks, but there is also a role for asking pointed questions. It is the latter part that most people neglect, yet it can increase the understanding of the person being coached, is more motivating,
- ~ Coaching requires giving feedback, but is more than that. People often learn more from being asked how well/badly they did than being told, being asked for opinions or solutions than being told.
- ~ Becoming a good coach takes time and effort. You need to slowly build close, open relationships with those you are coaching. You will only develop the skills through practice and experience.
- ~ Coaching is in large part to do with listening. Too often people assume that others are the same as them, and therefore that their solutions will work for them. This clearly isn't the case.
- ~ See your role as creating an environment where THAT individual can flourish. For example, two plants are one metre apart. One grows to 60cm, the other to 150cm. One is inside the greenhouse, the other is outside. The job of the coach is to create the greenhouse environment around every person they are coaching.