

EMPOWERING MINISTRY BY & WITHIN THE CHURCH

“Leadership” within a church must be done on two simultaneous fronts. Firstly, *within* the church. Churches rise or fall on their leadership. Secondly, on behalf of the church to the broader *community*. As a pastor I must shepherd our church. But when an issue in society arises, I am also obliged to address it on behalf of our church. However, it is simply not possible for me to do every aspect of this. As a pastor, I am dependent upon *other* leaders ably assisting in carrying the load of care and responsibility for the well-being of our church. In fact, the more leaders we have doing this, the more effective we can be and the larger we can grow. As a spokesman for our church, I can not be present at every opportunity in the public arena to address issues that affect the moral and spiritual climate of our society. Neither can I personally minister to every need within our congregation.

1. When Moses was overwhelmed with the responsibilities he was carrying, what advice did his father-in-law, Jethro, give him? (Exodus 18:19-23)

2. What strategically important thing did Jesus do at the outset of His ministry? (Mark 3:14)

In fact, most of Christ's third year of His incarnate ministry was spent privately training His disciples away from the gaze of the public.

3. Empowering others requires delegating. Why do you think that most people struggle to delegate?

Empowering means *to train, authorise and release* someone to do what they have been trained for. In Matthew 10 we read of Christ empowering His disciples to preach. Christ had perhaps spent a year having His disciples follow and watch Him. This is the first step in empowering: *modelling*. Every apprentice must *watch* their mentor first. But every apprentice must have a willingness to learn and do in order to watch well.

Shortly after I became a Christian, I felt a strong call on my life to be a preacher. As a 15 year old church kid, I now watched preachers differently. I watched bad preachers and tried to figure out why they were bad. I watched good preachers and noted what made them good. I was too young to be given the opportunity to preach in our church - so I took to the streets of Geelong (at first). I had to learn how to think on my feet, earn the attention of my audience, keep people's interest, and say something worthwhile. After Kim and I married, we served as youth leaders at Werribee Assembly of God. A new pastor was appointed whom we quickly grew to respect. Pastor Bob Smith was a great Bible teacher who took me under his wing. He taught me some of the necessary techniques for transitioning from being a preacher to becoming a teacher who preached his message. I was keen to learn and Ps Smith was prepared to give me opportunities to do so.

4. What was the empowering advice that Paul gave to his apprentice recorded in First Timothy 2:2?

Empowering involves *training* while being empowered involves a willingness to accept *instruction and correction*.

We see that after Christ had modelled ministry to disciples, He then gave them a go at trying it for themselves.

5. Christ's releasing His disciples to 'have a go' is recorded in Matthew 10:5-42. Which of these instructions do you think they might have found most helpful before going out to minister?
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What we observe in the above passage of Matthew is Christ *instructing* His disciples. *Instruction* is a necessary aspect to training and empowering.

1. MODEL

2. INSTRUCT

3. SUPERVISE

4. REVIEW

6. What report did Christ's disciples give Him upon their return, and how did He counsel them according to Luke 10:17-20?
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You cannot reach your fullest potential as a follower of Christ unless you are empowered to serve Christ. As you dispense the grace God has given you, you receive more grace for yourself (Matt. 10:8; 2Cor. 9:8).

All ministry training begins with *basic* training. The basis for any Christian ministry is knowledge of the Word of God. All believers, regardless of their ministry, must be acquainted with the Word of God (understand the unfolding story of God's Salvation for mankind; how the Old and New Covenants differ and why; who Jesus is; what God's will for His people today is).

7. But mere knowledge of God's Word is not the point. What does the Apostle say is the point of knowing God's Word in First Corinthians 8:1?
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All Christian ministry is a reflection of the heart of God. It is imperative to *know* God through His Word and prayer (refer to Acts 6:4). This is why the more responsibility a church leader has, the more they should be acquainted with God's Word and the more practiced they should be in prayer.

Being Equipped

God places within the Church certain gifted people who can equip the rest of the Church for service (“ministry”).

8. Note some of these ministries recorded in Ephesians 4:11. What does this passage state as the goal of these ministries? (Eph. 4:11-16)
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9. Have you been apprenticed in your role within the church? (If so, how?)
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God has gifted certain people with certain gifts that enable them to minister in ways that are easier for them than others. When a person has a spiritual gift they will often show more interest in that area of ministry and demonstrate some passion for it. But gifting does not mean fully realised potential. This requires equipping. Most of the people who have taught me the most valuable ministry training lessons have not been in a formal setting - neither has it been something they were deliberately intending. They may have made a mistake which I observed and have learned *indirectly* from for my own life. They may have simply retold an event in their ministry life where they exercised great wisdom. I have often been equipped from other people’s ‘success’ stories.

10. Read First Corinthians 12. Which are the most important gifts and ministries within a church?
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11. How can someone best identify their particular God-given gifts and ministry?
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It is one of the primary purposes of the church to equip people for Christ’s service. When we: model > instruct > train > release > supervise > review, we are *empowering* believers. Are you empowering others? Are you being empowered?

Amen.