

# Think Training

Encouraging and promoting the training of God's people for ministry

Issue 5 Summer 2007

**Welcome** to the fifth 'Think Training' bulletin – and the second of our new shorter 'twice a year' issues, carrying a range of articles on different aspects of training. For our next issue we plan to focus on the important matter of "the call" to ministry – what it is and what part it should play in training men for pastoral ministry.

In this Bulletin we begin with **Reflections on 1 Corinthians 13** by **Paul Mallard**, followed by articles on **Biblical Pictures of Leadership** and **Identifying Leaders**, by **Brian Boley** and **Marcus Honeysett**. We get a foretaste of **John Stevens'** three sessions on training planned for the **Cheltenham Bible Festival** on **'Becoming a Vibrant Church'**, and **Ray Evans** reviews a key book on **preaching Christ from the whole of Scripture**. These articles will join previous Bulletins in the Training Section of the FIEC website [www.fiec.org.uk](http://www.fiec.org.uk)

Jesus told his disciples that there was a 'harvest field' of sinful people who need to hear the 'good news of the kingdom' (Matthew 9:35-38). Then – as now – the question was not about the scale of the need, nor the power of the gospel, nor the compassion of the Saviour, but about the availability, suitability and willingness of gospel workers! The disciples are urged to pray!

It is instructive to note what Matthew records next. The very next verse – and then the whole of Chapter 10 – is about identifying, equipping and sending gospel workers! Without prayer such actions would be empty. But prayer is not all that is needed. Jesus devotes significant time and energy to training The Twelve to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. He sends them **together**, with a clear **strategy** and **message**, and a warning to expect **opposition** and **conflict**. They must go and they must speak in the **supernatural power of the Holy Spirit**. They will be bringers of **judgment** as well as **salvation**. For this important and demanding work they can expect to be **supported financially**, but they may have to **move on frequently** from place to place. In the end they are being called to **take their cross – that is, to die to self** – and face the prospect of

**losing their lives**. But for Jesus' sake, it will be worth it. Are we, and those in our churches, prepared for this great task? Are we willing to pay the cost involved? Are we ready for significant sacrifice? If we are, it will show at least in the time and energy we invest in training gospel workers. We will be asking not simply 'Who will go?' but 'How can we identify and prepare and equip the workers?' The harvest field is certainly abroad, but it is no less here at home. The need is certainly for full-time 'sent' gospel workers, but it is no less for vibrant, gospel-proclaiming churches. Churches certainly depend on dedicated pastors, but no less on active and committed members.

At the beginning of 2006 **FIEC Training** began something of a transformation! There is now a **new Training Team** (although much the same people!), chaired by **Paul Mallard**, and two 'working groups' devoted to specific aspects of FIEC Training. The Prepared for Service (PFS) Board is now responsible for developing our 'in-house' resources, Learn2Lead (L2L) and PFS, and is called the **Training Resources Team (TRT)**. The new **Pastoral Development Team (PDT)** is tasked with developing 'routes into ministry' for men considering full-time pastoral ministry. We will share news of the work of these two teams from time to time. One exciting development in **Learn2Lead** is that the **Good Book Company** have now taken on the publication and marketing of this popular training scheme, which will be launched at **Cheltenham** next month. For more information and to order contact the Good Book Company on 0845 225 0880 or visit [www.thegoodbook.co.uk](http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk) Also, PFS are offering two regional training workshops in the autumn to give a 'taste' of the Learn2Lead course and some help in

## CONTENTS

Page 1	Welcome
Page 2	Reflections on 1 Corinthians
Page 3	Biblical Pictures of Leadership
Page 4	Identifying Leaders
Page 6	Becoming a Vibrant Church
Page 8	Preaching Christ in All of Scripture: Book Review

running it in your own church. These are on Saturday September 15 at Walton Evangelical Church, Chesterfield S40 3DD, 10am-4pm (Donation: £5) and on Thursday October 4 at The Carey Centre, Reading RG1 7JR, 12-3.30pm (Donation: £2.50). They are open to anyone to attend. For more information or to book a place, call David Cook: 01202 738 416 or email [PsatCarey@aol.com](mailto:PsatCarey@aol.com)

As a **Training Team** we have adopted an aim which relates especially to the churches in which we all work: **to embed a vibrant culture of ministry in all our churches which is owned at every level through training.** This is the particular task we have set ourselves, and for which we need your prayers and support. It is our prayer that this Bulletin will make a contribution toward that goal, and that all the glory will go to Jesus.

*'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.'* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

In the first part of this year the Training Team consisted of **Ray Evans, John Gillespie, Martyn Hallett, Paul Mallard, Alan McKnight, John Stevens** and **Richard Underwood**. **Alan** has now left us and we wish to express our gratitude for his helpful contribution. In the new Training Team we have been joined by **Marcus Honeysett**, and have already begun to benefit enormously from his experience and wisdom. Any comments on the Bulletin or contributions for future issues should be directed to me as the (new) Training Team Vice-Chairman, at [martyn@gec.org.uk](mailto:martyn@gec.org.uk)

Martyn Hallett

## **'Something was missing..!'**

**Paul Mallard** shares some reflections on *1 Corinthians 13*

Everyone in the church was really excited. After eight months without a Pastor and several false starts, the church had finally set its sights on what seemed to be the right man. And what a man! He was a brilliant preacher, whose ministry was not just faithful, but powerful, parochial and contemporary. He had wide pastoral experience and must be excellent on a personal level, if his PhD in Counselling was anything to go by... And there's more! He seemed to be brilliant at admin, visionary in leadership and very effective at evangelism. The young people love him, the families were thrilled with his grasp of the priorities in Children's and Youth work and the older folk say that he reminded them of the Doctor (Lloyd-Jones, that is, not their rheumatics specialist!).

All that remained was for a Q and A session, followed by

a vote. It was in the bag, or so it seemed. Then someone asked an apparently innocuous question: "Why do you want to come and serve our church in particular?" The answer revealed the potential pastor's heart. For him, it was a brilliant career move and would enable him to demonstrate his gifts on a much wider stage and was therefore a move he cherished. As he continued to speak, two things became clear. First, his gifts were considerable. Secondly, something was missing. What was it? Then the penny dropped. There was a distinct absence of any love for Christ, or His people. Whatever drove this man, it was not humble, servant-hearted and sacrificial love. He did not receive the required percentage of the vote.

Does this sound a little far-fetched? Perhaps. Surely this is not what Paul is warning about in *1 Corinthians 13*? Here he mentions a whole galaxy of gifts and graces. They include miraculous gifts (v.1), deep theological perceptions (v.2), and sacrificial service (v.3). However, Paul's conclusion is very clear. In a growing crescendo of denunciation, he drives home his point. Without love, these gifts are empty and worthless. They are annoying and detrimental. Paul is not dismissive of spiritual gifts, but he is arguing that all ministry must exist within the context of love. *1 Corinthians 12 - 14* addresses the question: what does a spiritual man look like? Paul's answer is that spirituality is not measured by charismatic pyrotechnics or theological excellency, but it is seen in the quality of our love.

This is not a one-off, or an aberration in the New Testament. Jesus defined the greatest commandment in this way (*Matthew 22: 34-40*) and told His disciples that the **QUALITY** of their discipleship would be measured by the **QUANTITY** of their love (*John 13: 1, 3 -35*). After Peter's threefold failure, the Saviour's threefold question focuses on this very quality (*John 21: 15-17*). When the glorified Christ speaks to the church at Ephesus, He commends its industry, soundness and faithfulness (*Revelation 2: 1-3*), but then come the most devastating words that can be pronounced over a church - there is just one problem - you do not love me as you used to (v.4). This is such a serious fault that unless corrected, it will lead to the church's demise (v.5-7).

This is a personal test for each of us. Do we love Christ more than possessions, ambitions, reputation, wife, children and life itself? It is also a ministry test. Only after Peter has answered the Lord's question, does he say "*feed my sheep*" (*John 21: 15-17*). What is it we love about ministry? Probably not the wages, but is it the glamour, the power, or the prestige? Do we love preaching? That's okay, I'm sure. The most searching question must be, do we do this because we love Christ and as a result of this, love His flock?

In training our people for service - whether as church members, leaders, or pastor-teachers - we have a set of skills we want to impart. We want them to excel in Word-handling and be strong in people-handling. We want

them to learn the dynamics of being part of a group. We want to recognise and hone their gifts. Bible colleges and training schemes go even further in their list of priorities. But surely the Bible tells us that we must also seek to encourage in the hearts of all our people, a deep, passionate and persevering love for Christ. Without this, ministry is not only empty, is it dangerous and damaging.

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## Biblical Pictures of Leadership

### What is a leader? What is a Christian leader?

*God answers these questions in several Bible passages by giving us pictures taken from the everyday life of that time and culture. In this article **Brian Boley** looks at three of these:*

#### 1) Shepherd Leader

*“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”*

1 Peter 5:1-3

Nothing new here – I would imagine we all know that leaders are like shepherds looking after the flock. If we were to apply this picture of a shepherd to a leader how would that work out in their job description? It may well include these tasks:

- Ensure that all the sheep arrive at the destination
- Keep them together as a flock: don’t allow any to fall behind or get lost
- Lead them at a pace that is not too slow for the stronger ones and not too fast for the weaker ones
- Feed and nourish the sheep
- Put yourself out for the sheep on all occasions, since their well-being is of the utmost importance
- Administer first aid to any who are hurt
- Help at the birth of new lambs
- Protect the sheep
- Be prepared to work long hours in isolation
- Use your rod and staff wisely
- Communicate clearly
- Cope with the stupidity of the sheep

- Remember – it is best not to have a good sense of smell!

Quite a job! You may well add your own tasks, but certainly there is a similarity between a shepherd and a Christian leader. The job is far too big for one person and so it is good that many leaders share the task of church leadership with a team, and the days of a “one-man ministry” are only found in the history books – or are they?

Just a word of warning (from God not from me) found in Ezekiel 34 – “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?” The next few verses make for sober reading and heeding.

#### 2) Steward Leader

There are not many leaders who would call themselves ‘steward’ and perhaps even fewer who would call themselves ‘manager’, but in the Bible there is a sense in which the leader can be seen as a steward. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church writes, “Men ought to regard us (leaders of the church) as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Paul also tells Timothy to “Guard what has been entrusted to your care” (1 Timothy 6:20). So what has a leader been entrusted to do? What are his responsibilities? And is he a leader of people or a manager / steward of resources and responsibilities?

One management expert studied the role of leaders in many different aspects of life and society in the USA. As a result he differentiated the roles of a manager and a leader and developed this contrast.

The manager administers;	the leader innovates
The manager is a copy;	the leader is an original
The manager maintains;	the leader develops
The manager focuses on systems & structure;	the leader focuses on people
The manager relies on control;	the leader inspires trust
The manager has a short-range view;	the leader has a long-range perspective
The manager asks how and when;	the leader asks what and why
The manager has an eye on the bottom line;	the leader has his eye on the horizon
The manager accepts the status quo;	the leader challenges it
The manager is a classic good soldier;	the leader is his own person
The manager does things right;	the leader does the right thing

What do you think about the differences identified here? Are you a leader or a manager? Is it possible to be both? Is a “steward-leader” part of the leadership team to help and support the “real” leader? Does the steward / manager have an important function to fulfil? Is your church led or managed?

### 3) Servant Leader

“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ (Matthew 20:25-28)

Serving as a leader is literally that: to identify the needs of the people and ensure that these needs are met as far as possible. As a result of this the people will be able to work better as a team and as individuals – fulfilling all their potential. Servant Leadership has been described by one commentator as needing ten key characteristics.

<i>Listening</i>	<i>Empathy</i>
<i>Healing</i>	<i>Awareness</i>
<i>Persuasion</i>	<i>Conceptualisation</i>
<i>Foresight</i>	<i>Stewardship</i>
<i>Building community</i>	<i>Commitment to the growth of people</i>

Another writer puts it this way: “A servant leader does not consider himself above those he leads. Rather, he is ‘primus inter pares’ – from the Latin, meaning ‘first among equals’. That is, he sees those he leads as peers to teach and to learn from. He is willing to lead others in order to reach an agreed goal, but he doesn’t believe that being the leader makes him better than others. Because of this, the servant leader is a consummate team builder. He will draw on the strengths of followers, and be a follower himself when appropriate. Such a leader doesn’t lead by decree or dictate. Instead, he leads by allowing everyone to do what they do well. In this sense, he might be like the ringmaster at the circus – directing people to their proper position, then stepping out of the spotlight and letting them shine.”

Is this right? Is this what Jesus envisaged when he talked about being a servant? Are you served by leaders? Are you a servant leader?

Brian Boley is a training consultant based in Leicester. The substance of this article first appeared in his regular *Christian Training* newsletter. To follow up anything he has written here please contact him at [brian@christiantraining.org.uk](mailto:brian@christiantraining.org.uk)

## Identifying, Resourcing and Releasing a New Generation of Leaders

*Marcus Honeysett asks why there is a shortage of leaders in our churches – and what can be done about it.*

*“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”*

2 Tim. 2:2

It is all too easy to assume that identifying, envisioning, resourcing and releasing the next generation of Christian leaders is someone else’s job. In discussions with long-standing leaders in recent years, I have heard time after time the following four reasons for not bringing on the next generation:

1. When we trained it was never taught that it is our job.
2. Nobody has taught us how to train, identify and equip embryonic young leaders.
3. All our time is already taken. We work long hours and simply don’t have the extra capacity to bolt on such a large additional responsibility,
4. We were trained that the measure of success in ministry is whether I have taken every opportunity I could to exercise my own gifts. If I start to train someone else I will have to forgo some of those opportunities and that will feel like failure. Especially if my trainee does a bad job. And worse still if they do it better than me...

There are 4 generations of Christian leaders in 2 Tim.2:2. Paul passes the good deposit to Timothy. Timothy finds reliable people to pass it on to, one primary characteristic of whom is that they are gifted in passing it on still further. There is exponential multiplication of gospel ministry because the leader of the local church passes on the gospel to multiple people who are themselves equipped to pass it on to multiple people.

Passing on the gospel, and training others to pass it on, is a pretty good definition of discipleship. Timothy was told to pass on the good deposit *and* to pass on leadership. As a leader he was to produce other leaders. When we combine 2 Tim 2:2 with Ephesians 4:11-13, it is reasonable to say that leaders aren’t doing their job unless they are discipling and releasing the service of younger leaders:

*“It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach all unity in the faith and in the knowledge of*

*the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"*

Eph. 4:11-13

The leadership task isn't complete if leaders aren't releasing new leaders. It doesn't finish when we have learned to lead. It finishes when we have reproduced ourselves and have removed all the hurdles we can in front of the next generation in order to help them exceed us.

### **Hurdles**

Question: Pause for a moment and jot down any hurdles you can think of that might hinder the emergence of the next generation of church leaders in your church and through your ministry.

In his excellent book "Growing Leaders", Colin Buckland suggests five types of hindrance or blockage that leaders and churches may encounter. They may be deliberate, they may be quite unnoticed. They may be caused by the expectations of the pastor or the expectations of the congregation:

1. Leadership blockage. Current leaders who are insecure and don't want to produce people who might replace them or challenge their accepted norms
2. Cultural blockage. A lack of acceptance of new blood. A baptising of the institutions and cultural norms of a previous generation. A strongly established comfort zone that will not allow that younger leaders might be able to give a wise and biblical lead to those who are older. This results in no freedom being allowed to take risks or to try things and fail.
3. Spiritual blockage. There is little openness to God giving gifts of leadership. Or, where there is an openness, there is no understanding that the primary place God has given for the development of leaders is the local church as opposed to the training college or parachurch mission. The mindset is: "Christian leaders don't come from here."
4. Historical blockage. Here the mindset is: "we have never developed leaders before. We have employed a pastor to do what we need. He is the man of God; we don't want anyone else."
5. No models of leadership development. Where there is no understanding of how Christian leaders emerge, try things out, are discipled and grow, then there will be no deliberateness about the process.

### **Becoming Leader-Makers**

Clearly leaders will never be identified in our churches in any numbers unless there is a general understanding

among leaders and congregations that we expect them to be. God is giving enough gifts to the church for her building up to maturity and for her witness. But not enough leaders are coming through. We must conclude that there are man-made hurdles that are preventing them. I believe a key one is when a church has no normal expectation that this can, and should be, happening. Intentionality is the key: having a normal process that everyone understands and expects. That is perfectly normal when helping people identify and develop in a whole range of other spiritual gifts. The same should be true with leadership.

How, then, can we establish that the emergence and discipling of new leaders in our churches should be our normal expectation? For it is the local church where they should be identified, brought to the attention of the pastoral leadership, given initial encouragement and entrusted with responsibility. Here are a few steps we would expect to see in the emergence of new leaders:

1. The church regularly praying that God will raise up leaders. Current pastoral leaders praying that God will raise up those who do it better than us, and being humble enough when he does.
2. Current leaders spotting embryonic potential. That means knowing what to look for, being able to see latent talent and knowing how to encourage a congregation to accept the stumbling and mistakes of someone who may be a long way from being fully-formed.
3. Talking and praying with potential leaders about how to develop their gifts and entrust them, under appropriate oversight, with responsibilities.
4. Giving people opportunities to develop skills and confirm God's leading in gentle ways. Finding ways to ease them in. That may involve giving embryonic leaders the tasks that we find most enjoyable. Developing leaders is always a sacrifice for existing leaders.
5. Supporting them as they explore and grow.
6. Cheering them on as they surpass us and encouraging them to do better and greater things than we have. We need a new generation of leaders who can see further because they have stood on our shoulders.

As leaders we are God's talent scouts for the next generation of leaders. There is an unbreakable link between people being willing to stick their head above the parapet and the encouragement and nurture we give them. Paul says that he doesn't lord it over the faith of others but works with them for their joy, so that they stand firm by faith (2 Cor.1:24, Phil. 1:26). For current leaders to do so will be sacrificial on three levels:

1. We have to give up doing things we really enjoy so that others get to have a go.

2. New leaders will do things less well than us and we must resist the temptation to instantly snatch responsibility back when they do.
3. Sooner or later we will have to pick up the pieces when they get it badly wrong.

Developing young leaders is like having children. Sometimes they drive you crazy. Sometimes they sulk. Sometimes they get it wrong in their over-enthusiasm. But we keep on feeding and nurturing and encouraging with a smile on our face, because we were once like that too.

By his grace might the Lord use many of us to be leader-makers in our churches.

Some reflection questions:

- How good are you at nurturing leadership gifts in others?
- Which of the 6 steps in the emergence of new leaders are you and your church particularly good at? Which do you most need to work on?
- How difficult do you or your congregation find it to let juniors lead, who may do it less well than you?

Marcus Honeysett promotes leadership training in local churches through Living Leadership. If you wish to follow up anything in this article please contact Marcus at [marcus@livingleadership.org](mailto:marcus@livingleadership.org)

## Becoming a Vibrant Church: A Vision for Training!

*John Stevens gives us a synopsis of his three forthcoming seminar sessions at the Cheltenham Bible Festival*

The greatest need in our generation is for thriving, vibrant churches which faithfully hold out the word of life to a lost world. Sadly all too many churches, especially among our FIEC churches, are small and struggling, and seem to have settled for “faithful decline.” Unless something changes, and changes rapidly, many such churches will close in the next ten to twenty years. However, the picture is not entirely bleak. A good number of FIEC churches are growing and have thriving ministries, and many smaller churches have great potential to grow.

Why is it, though, that some churches are growing and others are declining? Why, in particular, are churches that share a common theology, and which preach the same gospel, facing such different prospects? There are many reasons, but one major contributing factor is often the culture of ministry practiced by the church. Doctrinal orthodoxy is not enough, in and of itself, to ensure that a

church is vibrant. It is an essential prerequisite, but must be accompanied by a Biblical pattern of ministry.

The **FIEC Training Team** has recently been considering how we can best help churches to face the challenges of our contemporary situation. We believe that in order to become vibrant all of our churches need to adopt a culture of training which will equip every member of the church to use their gifts to serve the body of Christ.

“Training” might seem a “worldly” idea, drawn more from secular management theories than from the Bible. However, the Christian life is essentially all about training. To be a disciple is to be a “learner” – a “trainee” – who is being taught to live to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. As Christian disciples we are to be “life-long learners,” and our mission is to “make disciples” of others. Training is about much more than mere acquisition of ministry skills and doctrinal knowledge. It involves the development of Christian character, spiritual maturity, servant-heartedness, and the acquisition of practical wisdom. When we understand this, we will realise that we all need a lifetime of training if we are to be effective disciples of Christ. Training for service should be at the very heart of church life, because it is the very essence of the Christian life. Training is not an end in itself, but is the means that God uses to equip people to do his work in the world.

The Vision Statement of the FIEC Training Team is “**to embed a vibrant culture of ministry in all our churches which is owned at every level through training.**” At the **Cheltenham Bible Festival** we will be presenting a seminar series entitled “**Becoming a Vibrant Church**”, which will set out how we think we can become vibrant and growing churches through adopting a culture of training. This article gives a foretaste of what we are going to be considering in those seminars, with the hope that you will be interested and be inspired to come – and encourage the members of your church to come as well!

### The Life of a Vibrant Church

First we look at “**The Life of a Vibrant Church – What is a vibrant church?**” In this seminar we consider the example of one of the most dynamic churches in the New Testament, the church at Antioch. The importance of this church, which figures prominently in Acts, is often neglected because there is no epistle written to it. But the church at Antioch was crucial to the spread of the gospel throughout Asia and Europe. It was a “**growing and giving**” church with a concern for the cause of the gospel in the wider world. These are two key characteristics of a vibrant church. It was a church that grew both in numbers and in spiritual maturity, as it was taught (i.e. “trained”) by Paul and Barnabas and other gifted leaders (Acts 11:19-26). It gave generously to serve the wider interest of the Kingdom of God. It gave money to meet the needs of poor believers in Judea (Acts 11:27-30) and was prepared to give away its best leaders for the sake of the gospel, so that churches

could be planted elsewhere (Acts 13:1-3). It rejoiced to see the wider work of the kingdom growing (Acts 14:26-28). This is the vision that we need to have for our churches – that they should be growing and giving. Seeking growth is not an unspiritual goal, provided we understand that growth is not an end in itself. Rather we need to grow in order to give away, so that the kingdom of God can be extended. We need a vision to grow for the sake of the kingdom rather than settling for managed decline or the apparent success of stability.

A major obstacle in developing this kind of vision is a misunderstanding of the purpose of our gathering together as “church.” We tend to think that we meet together on Sundays for the purpose of worshipping God and to serve him – we call our meetings “Services” or “Worship Services.” With this mentality we think that what we gather together to do on a Sunday is the most important thing we do for God in the week. If we want to be growing and giving churches we need to see the purpose of church differently. We gather together to encourage and equip one another to worship God by serving him through the rest of the week. Worship encompasses our whole lives (Romans 12:1-2), and we meet together primarily to be trained to worship by offering ourselves as living sacrifices at work, in our families and in our communities. Gathering together as church is more like a regular “pit-stop” so that we can be equipped to keep running the race. When we see this as the purpose of church we are more likely to be outward looking and mission minded, and our church is more likely to be growing and giving.

### **The Work of a Vibrant Pastor**

Secondly we will look at ***“The Work of a Vibrant Pastor – What should church leaders do to build vibrant churches?”*** All too often we fail to become vibrant churches that are giving and growing because we have a wrong view of the work of church leaders. Many smaller churches see success as being able to afford to employ a pastor to do the work of ministry and to care for the congregation. Their goal is simply to keep on being able to support a pastor. The pastor is seen, first and foremost, as a kind of “chaplain”, employed to care for the needs of the congregation. This model of ministry is inherently self-limiting, restricts the growth of the church, and is very different from the role of the pastor as set out in the New Testament.

In the New Testament the leadership of the church is always plural, and the task of pastors is to equip the members of the church to do the work of ministry. In Ephesians 4:11 Paul writes that Jesus has given pastor-teachers to the church “to prepare God’s people for works of service.” The work of ministry is done by the church members, not the pastor alone, and the pastor is set apart to train and encourage the members of the church to serve. It is a sad irony, for example, that in too many churches the pastor is expected to provide the kind of care for widows in the church that the New

Testament expects widows to provide for others, namely, “showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble, and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds” (1 Timothy 5:10).

The biblical role of the pastor is more akin to our modern concept of the football team “player manager.” The task of the player manager is not to play the whole game himself, but to select, train, deploy, oversee and motivate the team. The role of the pastor is to be the “coach” rather than a “chaplain” of the congregation, training others to do the work of ministry through teaching and example. This common misunderstanding may be brought about by pastors themselves, where they carve out a chaplaincy role because they think their gifts are limited or they “need to be needed”, or it may be forced on them by congregations who want to be served by the pastor, and see the pastor as their servant rather than as their leader who trains them to serve. We will only become vibrant growing and giving churches when we have a Biblical view of pastoral ministry.

### ***Becoming a Vibrant People***

Lastly we will consider ***“Becoming a Vibrant People - How can church members be equipped to serve in vibrant churches?”*** It follows from the vision of the church and church leadership set out in the first two seminars, that if we want to be a vibrant church then the congregation must do the work of ministry. Every member ministry needs to be a reality in our churches. Rather than expecting the pastor, or a small number of leaders, to be doing the work of caring for the congregation, the congregation need to be taking care of each other, using the gifts God has given them for this purpose. God has distributed a wide range of gifts to the believers who make up the body of Christ, and these gifts are to be detected, developed and deployed so that the body of Christ will be built up, in maturity and in size. Gifts are given to equip Christians to serve one another.

As congregation members we need to grasp our responsibility to use our gifts. We need to discover what they are, and then set about using them in the service of others. We are not to be passengers but workers. When we understand this we will surely want to be “trained” so that we are able to use our gifts to their best possible effect. One factor preventing our churches from being vibrant churches is that deep down we often want to be served rather than to serve. We want others to use their God-given gifts to serve us and meet our needs, rather than seeing ourselves as having the responsibility and privilege of serving. If the members of a congregation share this vision they will want their leaders to be “trainers”, who will be helping, equipping, encouraging and motivating them to use their gifts. God has given the church everything it needs to be a vibrant church. Too often we do not use what he has given us, and our structures and philosophy of ministry prevent the gifts from being used as they should be.

We hope that this seminar series will be provocative and challenging. You probably won't agree with everything that is said, but we hope you will be stimulated to think about the ministry in your church, and whether a commitment to training might enable it to become a more vibrant church.

Finally we should remember that any church can become a vibrant church. Some think that training is only relevant to large churches with lots of people. But every large church was once small, and every small church has the potential to become a more vibrant church. In many ways large and small churches face exactly the same problem: not enough people to do the work of ministry. Any church that is growing and giving will always be functioning on the edge of its capacity. It is easy to think that large churches have a lot of slack or spare capacity, but they won't if they are doing their job properly. Both small and large churches face exactly the same challenge – how to equip God's people so that they can serve him better. The answer in both cases is to be found through training.

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## What are you preaching? – a book review by Ray Evans

*'Preaching Christ in All of Scripture'* by Edmund P. Clowney, published by Crossway Books, 189 pages, price £12.99, ISBN NUMBER: 978-1-58134-452-3

This important little book comes with the endorsement of leading reformed Evangelicals such as Al Mohler, Tim Keller, Bryan Chappell and Wayne Grudem. Deservedly, for Ed Clowney is passionately concerned that in preaching we set forth 'the full drama of redemption and its realisation in Christ'.

In the first two chapters he outlines how we can do so, while subsequent chapters give preached examples of what he means from both Testaments. These are rich 'spiritual food for the soul' but they also repay careful study. For in seeing how he models what he teaches, the thoughtful preacher will learn how to make Christ the 'high point' of every message – without becoming repetitive and predictable.

Clowney puts his finger on a real problem, namely, that the preacher can easily 'move' from an Old Testament text straight to the moral and spiritual lessons found in the text. For example, a sermon on Joseph's endurance of unjust suffering can easily be 'translated' into a general exhortation to bear with our own difficult circumstances. The problem with all such moralising, explains the author, is that "It presents a truth apart from the history of redemption and, therefore, apart from the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, the

Lordship of Christ. It unconsciously assumes that we can go back to the Father apart from the Son."

Clowney helpfully explains and models how Christ is the 'hero' of every text. So *he* is the 'ultimate Joseph' in bearing unjust suffering, even to death for us. He is the 'ultimate David' who defeats the 'giants' that threaten to overwhelm God's people. We share the fruits of his victory simply because he is our Captain. Christ is the ultimate meaning of every Old Testament saint and symbol. It is only as we take the principle enshrined in an Old Testament hero's life, or in some symbol, onwards to the Lord Jesus Christ – and then through him on to us – that we preach truly 'Christian' sermons. Only then will people be transformed into his likeness and not just become moral and religious.

Clowney is careful to point out what this does not mean. 'We do not ignore the specific message of the text, nor will it do to write an all-purpose Christocentric sermon finale and tag it for weekly use. You must preach Christ as *the text presents him*.' [emphasis added].

The largest section of the book is where he exemplifies all this – taking texts from Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, 2 Samuel, the Psalms and the Gospels, plus three 'topical' sermons in which he interweaves Biblical themes around a common idea. It would have been helpful to have some messages from the epistles, especially the sections of moral exhortation, to see what they look like with his insights. But what we have are great and very helpful.

This book, and others on a similar theme (such as Clowney's own *The unfolding mystery*, and Graeme Goldsworthy's *Preaching the whole Bible as Christian Scripture*) have really helped me. Looking back, I have preached too many well-intentioned 'moral lesson' sermons and 'here is tonight's ancient history lesson' sermons. Taking on board what Clowney says – so that it *actually changes how you preach* – will make your hearers feel more often, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked and opened the Scriptures to us?'

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