

EVALUATING-EQUIPPING-ENGAGING-ENTRUSTING

Posted by Bob Young*

Every Christian must consider where and how God desires to use her or him. A number of years ago I heard an outline of Matthew 28:19-20. It remains firmly fixed in my mind, although I do not remember the original source. Disciples must be discovered, developed, and deployed. This task was given by Jesus to his disciples; those disciples were to teach other disciples. As new disciples continue to discover and develop other disciples, the number of disciples multiplies.

Disciples, as followers of Christ, are called to follow in the footsteps of the Savior. The process of finding and fulfilling one's place in the work of the kingdom may be described with four "E's": evaluate, equip, engage, entrust. These four steps can also be applied to a local church.

EVALUATING: Listening and Learning—Seeking God's Direction

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO? What does God want from me? What does God want from this church? This first step requires listening to God and evaluating God's specific will in context. Evaluating involves thinking about gifts, skills, and opportunities. Evaluating is a process designed to find the point where the will of God, needs and opportunities, and available skills and abilities converge.

An important part of evaluating is time spent in prayer and meditation—at home, privately, with family, with friends and confidants, and in retreats. In prayerful evaluation, you should acknowledge God's importance and role in your life and consider how he has uniquely shaped and molded you for ministry. This is also an opportunity to declare your desire to live and serve within the giftedness that he has placed within you. Ask for His direction. Be sure to include your family in these times of listening and learning. [In the context of a local church, the evaluation follows parallel concepts but is applied corporately within the life and experience of the church.]

"Discernment of God's will is concerned with recognizing and making choices congruent with who we are in God.... The habit of discernment is an attitude of listening to God in all of life." (Rose Mary Dougherty, *Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening*, 2009, pp. 12, 19)*

EQUIPPING: Preparations and Readiness

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO GET READY? What does this church need to do to be ready to move forward in the will of God? The second step—equipping—is a time to get ready. This involves developing a clear understanding of Scripture, preparing for service, and equipping for specific ministry. Mission and ministry, whether it is an individual commitment is to full-time ministry, a commitment to vocational or volunteer ministry, or the shared work and commitment of a local congregation, requires an understanding of life and practice rooted in solid biblical teaching. Getting ready involves self-discovery and identifying the opportunities God provides. It involves careful Bible study, spiritual sensitivity and direction, and the initial steps toward developing a strategy and action plan. It often involves sharpening the skills necessary to serve in the places and ways God is revealing.

Readiness is characterized by a developed heart and understanding, a commitment and passion. Developing a theology of ministry, understanding spiritual identity, and developing insights and understandings essential for effective ministry must be part of the process. Theology is like the rudder of a ship guiding the mission of God and providing direction for ministry. It is also like the engine of the ship propelling forward the mission of God. A solid biblical foundation provides both direction and power for developing an effective mission and ministry strategy.

ENGAGING: Ministry-Mission

READY, SET, GO! The work of mission or ministry is seldom easy. This is true for individuals; it is also true for local churches. Ministry is a process of continuing engagement. Ministry requires engaging the surrounding culture and those who live in that cultural context, making disciples, developing a community of faith, encouraging and enabling others in the community for involvement and ownership, and equipping new teachers and leaders.

"The church most frequently establishes its rationale for being—its purpose for existing—while articulating its faith. An unexpressed faith withers." (Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 1996, p. 31)

ENTRUSTING: Passing the Baton

The task of ministry is to establish mature Christians and mature works capable of becoming self-sustaining, so they can go forth and repeat the process again and again. The goal is to develop mission churches—churches with a sense of mission and a desire to plant more churches. The ultimate goal is always to pass the baton—to help others participate in the relay, to develop the next and future faith generations. The goal is to develop leaders who will produce other leaders, Christians who produce more Christians, and churches that are self-duplicating. This requires nurturing new Christians and new churches toward maturity.

It is not easy to believe in others and entrust the work to them. Recognize that this step is not only about trusting other people—it is also about trusting God and His Spirit to work through his inspired Word to accomplish his purpose in and through his people.

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