

Leadership: Influence, Investment, Instruction

By Bob Young

Many tasks are imposed on leaders. Leaders gladly accept a number of tasks that require attention, because “someone has to do it.” Some tasks are part of the job; other tasks belong in the category of what people think the leader should do. In the midst of the busyness of multiplied tasks, each leader must carefully establish priorities. Leaders, listen to me well! The first priority of any effective leader is to foster discipling relationships.

In the work of Latin American Leadership Development, indigenous leaders are raised up by mentoring—spending time, maintaining contact, counseling, advising, and modeling. An important part of the work of leaders in a local church is to be available to mentor future leaders. Current leaders should be able to answer the question of succession—who is my replacement? Who are the next generation of leaders?

To all church leaders, I encourage you to develop the relational aspect of your calling to leadership. Who are you constantly in touch with as you lead? If you do not maintain contact, you may not be leading. It is helpful to analyze your own personal leadership by making three lists—those you are seeking to influence; those you are actively, diligently investing in; those you are personally discipling. Three basic concepts of leadership: influence, investment, instruction. If you do not have influence in the life of a person, you cannot lead that person. If you are not investing yourself in the life of a person, you will be an ineffective leader, oftentimes in position but not in reality. If you are not instructing and discipling a person, you are not leading spiritually.

Leaders should identify three groups in their leadership circle. The first group is ever-expanding and ever-changing as you establish new relationships as part of your daily Christian walk. You are seeking relationships and influence. The second group represents closer relationships and an increasing investment of time, energy, effort, and resources. Those in the third group can be described as your “Timothys.” Every leader should be able to make these lists relatively quickly. Especially important! Every leader should be able to name the members of the third group without hesitation.

Church leaders must be committed to making disciples. The sequence is influence, investment, and instruction. The task of church leadership is to personally make disciples, teach others how to make disciples by modeling and mentoring, and focus on the works of ministry that lead to making disciples. A church leader who lives out this priority will at the same time be developing those who will become future leaders. This priority demands all the attention and effort of the leader. When leaders have this focus, there will be other things that they will not be able to do, no matter how much they might want to do them. Leaving some things undone is necessary when you want to achieve extraordinary results.

It should not be considered a failure not to do everything that people believe the leader should do. The reality is that it’s not humanly possible to please everyone. When leaders are dedicated to trying to do everything, they end up doing nothing. On the contrary, a leader must focus on the priority. There will always be things that are not done. It will not matter what is left undone if the priority is accomplished. The spiritual leader who wishes to lead a church into the plan and eternal purpose of God must prioritize and concentrate on the essential work of making disciples who will make other disciples.

Influence, investment, instruction. Church leaders are called to lead people, not an organization!