

### The Coaching Vision

The dream is to have ministers of the gospel everywhere coaching fellow-workers. Not only do they preach, pray, visit, counsel, strategise, raise funds and manage, but they also inspire others to give up their lives for the same gospel. Their sons and daughters in the faith join them in the family business.

I have no-one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. (Philippians 2:20-22)

Coaches are talent scouts with an eye for those with gifts of teaching and leadership. Everywhere they go they are taking young men and women under their wing, protecting, teaching, guiding, correcting, sponsoring. In the midst of a busy ministry life they gather around them one or two or half a dozen who want more than the weekly sermon, they are spiritually hungry. These young protégés always have a tough question on the Bible or some issue of theology, ethics or church life.

So the minister as coach opens up his life to them in a way that he can only do with a few. He exposes his heart for Christ, his hope of heaven, his prayers, his joys and sorrows, his victories and defeats, his struggles with people, his skills, his fears. He shares his family life, his hobbies, his recreation. They are true co-workers. And these apprentice preachers are catching the heart of being Christian and serving Christ's people by serving the gospel.

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings-- what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

### What is Coaching

The ministry of coaching can be described as:

**Passing on the baton of gospel ministry to fellow-workers.**

### The Coaching Mandate

**Ministers of the gospel are responsible to raise up fellow-workers in the gospel.**

Each generation of preachers is to raise up the next. The logic of coaching is simple yet compelling in the Pastoral Epistles in the language of 'entrusting' (pisteuw), 'committing' (paraqhkh), 'deposit' (paratiqhmi), 'guarding' (fulassw) and 'steward' (oikonomoß).

Paul was entrusted (pisteuw) by God with the glorious gospel (1 Tim 1:11; Tit 1:3). God is 'our Saviour who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' This salvation is through the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself on the cross as a ransom. This saving work is to be proclaimed to the nations (1 Tim 2:3- 7)

Timothy is commanded to guard (fulassw) this deposit (paratiqhmi) of the gospel (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14). This charge to Timothy is in reality from God and Christ Jesus (1 Tim 5:21). Timothy is committed (paraqkh) with charge to fight the fight of faith in the face of opponents (1 Tim 1:18). Timothy is to commit (paraqkh) this ministry to reliable men who are able teachers (2 Tim 2:2). Titus is responsible to appoint overseers as God's stewards (oikonomoß) (Tit 1:7).

## Why Coaching

Coaching is a familiar activity, applied to many fields of human endeavour. There are coaches in sport but also in education, at work, in the arts such as music, drama and dance.

Coaching is a powerful metaphor for the personal training of gospel workers. It captures many essential features of this ministry. Not all coaches will fulfil these ideals but the concept of coaching implies certain values and methods.

Coaching is:

- Relational and personal, not institutional
- A commitment to the person and the whole of life, not just professional skills
- A long term commitment through the ups and downs of life and career
- Learning on the job from one who knows the game well
- Educationally powerful, being instruction in the context of active
- Personally tailored to the needs and stage of the person
- Purposeful, working toward development and progress not just coping with problems

For training Christian ministers it would seem more appropriate to use a biblical term. How does the Bible speak about the development and training of gospel workers?

The fundamental reality is that God prepares and sends his servants from Abraham to Moses to the prophets to Jesus to the apostles and all ministers of the gospel. It is His sovereign work but how are we involved?

## Why not use a biblical term?

There are some instructions, especially in the Pastoral Epistles, dealing with the selection of church leaders. However there is little explicit instruction about the formation and training of ministers in the Scriptures. It seems there is no specific term for this activity in the Bible. Why is this? It is because the content and method of training of gospel workers is implied by the gospel itself. The whole revelation of God in Christ in Scripture is relevant to the training of God's servants. The selection and preparing of ministers is an extension of our ministry of the gospel, not a separate activity.

In the last half of the 20th Century the language of 'discipling', 'training' and 'equipping' has been used amongst evangelicals for the activity of training co-workers. At least these are biblical words as translated in some of our recent versions. However we are in danger of giving biblical words a non-biblical meaning. We are importing our own meaning into these terms.

All Christians are disciples of Christ, not just leaders or ministers, and nowhere in the New Testament are ministers encouraged to call their own disciples. We are only disciples of Christ, not of human teachers. The language of 'training' in the New Testament is not applied to leadership training but is just another way of speaking about edification, being trained in sound doctrine and godly living by the Scriptures. The 'equipping' of Ephesians 4:12 is of all the saints, not just ministers of the Word.

In the end it is better to use a non-biblical word such as 'coaching' and import meaning that is consistent with the way God works in training His workers. This avoids the problem of using a biblical word in a non-biblical way and so distorting the meaning of the biblical text. 'Coaching' not a biblical term but the concept captures our role in the preparation of God's servants. It also implies values and methods inherent in all gospel ministry, such as love, faithfulness, truth, growth.