

Introduction

We are thinking here about selecting people into our team to be ministry as apprentices, with a view to 'vocational' ministry long term.

Active not Passive Recruiting

Ministry trainers are talent scouts, with an eye for those who have the gifts and integrity to preach the Word and pastor the flock of God.

Churches and denominations are sometimes more concerned with 'selecting out' rather than 'selecting in'. In some ways this discipline is needed to preserve faithful ministry. However trainers must learn to select people 'into' the ministry, not just grooming those who fit our bureaucratic boxes, but building ministries around a wide range of people with different gifts and personalities.

We also should not wait for people to 'volunteer' or put themselves forward for ministry. Pastors should be actively thinking through and seeking out godly, gifted people who can evangelize, teach and lead the church. Ministers should be active in 'calling' others into ministry, not passively waiting for some to feel called. (See DP7.05- 'Who Calls the Minister?')

Biblical Criteria

We should remind ourselves of the basic criteria for considering a person for gospel ministry. We are thinking here of the vocational ministry. Although we may be selecting for apprenticeship training, we are looking to their long term suitability for full-time ministry.

From the Pastoral Epistles the fundamental criteria for appointing Timothy, Titus, overseers and deacons are:

- Blameless reputation and example of godliness
- Commitment to the Word of God
- Ability to teach others
- Proven leadership, for example, in the family

From these, there are some basic questions to consider:

- Is there any past or present sin that could bring Christ's Name into disrepute?
- Are they genuinely converted and able to articulate their faith in Christ?
- Are they reading and asking questions about the Bible and theology?
- Are they faithful in applying the Scriptures to their thinking and behaviour?
- Do they spontaneously serve others, not just when given a role?
- Do they work at evangelism?
- Are they teaching others the Bible in some context?

- Are others following them because of their ministry?
- Are they self-starters, taking initiatives in ministry?

'Selecting in' mistakes

Why do we miss recruiting suitable people for ministry?

- We only recruit people similar to us, who like us and who respond to us. We choose those we can work with, who make us feel comfortable. And We think only our type of person can reach and lead others. There is a diversity of personalities who should be ministers of the gospel.
- We miss the maverick, the revolutionary who is harder to train but might evangelise nations.
- We miss the creative and intuitive who often drop the ball but will reach different people in different ways.
- We recruit for a particular role rather than starting with the person and what they could do. What is special about this person and could they minister to?
- We don't let people out of the box we have mentally put them in. People grow beyond our early impressions and these impressions are sometimes wrong.
- We wait too long to recruit and they choose other career directions.
- We don't give people enough responsibility so we see their gifts. We do so much ourselves that we stifle others.

'Selecting out' mistakes

Why do we sometimes choose the wrong people?

- We recruit to the institution or our personality, not the vision of the gospel. This creates inflexibility, dependency and wrong motivations.
- We are focussed on the externals of personality and ability and not the heart (1 Sam 16:7). We choose the charismatic star, the flashy over the faithful.
- We choose the enthusiast who achieves little in the long term.
- We select those not loyal to us. Are they team players? Will our spouses get on with each other?
- We recruit those motivated by attention seeking, dependency or empire building. Those who are overly dependent on acceptance and recognition may make poor ministry apprentices. They will jump through all the hoops but for the wrong reasons.
- We choose the socially awkward, who may be competent in many other ways. Notwithstanding the comments above about diverse personalities in ministry, those who are really awkward with others will have trouble teaching and leading.
- We choose those with low secular work satisfaction. Are they more interested in ministry because work is boring or difficult?

- We fail to see they do not have the emotional stability and toughness for ministry. Will they be able to face failure, criticism, disappointment and other's suffering?

You will have noticed these mistakes are often in tension. It is an art, not a science. We are driven to prayer and we learn from our 'mistakes'.