



Editor's Note

In this issue we are beginning a three part series on **Passing the Baton of Leadership**, and therefore will be postponing the ongoing series on Paul's letter to Titus. Training up and releasing younger men to leadership and eldership is essential for the continuity of the work of the Lord. Yet, this is sadly lacking in many churches. And, in fact, there is a dearth of younger men available, able or willing to step into "the gap" and assume the mantle of shepherding God's people. We encourage you to read and study what Paul Bramsen and Nate Bramsen challenge us with.

On a related note, just recently, the ministry of **Biblical Eldership Resources (BER)** addressed the issue of "Keeping Our Youth and Young Adults." Dr. Bill McRae addressed topics like, "What keeps them in church, why are they leaving." This address is must watching (the addresses were video taped) for every elder and spiritual leader. The other topic, by Alex Strauch, dealt with the importance of elders being actively "present" with the people in the church, based on the book of 1 Peter. Both of the these addresses (each recorded in four segments) together with discussion questions are available on the BER website: (www.BiblicalEldership.com/2013-toronto-conf).

The conference was simulcast from Toronto, Ontario to sites in the US and Canada. If you would like to host a satellite site at a future BER conference, watch the BER website for upcoming announcements.

Speaking of BER, there are many other good resources on the BER site, all

with the focus on promoting eldership and building up elders worldwide. The first main section contains straightforward biblical teaching on the plurality of elder leadership in the local church (both written, audio and video series). The second section is for those churches that currently do not have biblical eldership, but are convinced they should transition to it. The third section provides a curriculum of about 150 videos for helping elders become more effective in shepherding God's people. These can be used as stand alone studies by individuals, or can be used in elders' meetings. Probably one of the best ways to use this material is for an older man to use it while mentoring a younger man who has potential for leadership.

I would encourage you to spend some time perusing the site and asking the Lord, "How can I use this to build up my own shepherding effectiveness and that of others?" More specifically, "Who can I invite to study this material with me?"

On a final note, the "US National Workers and Elders Conference" was helpful recently, and all the messages are online at:

<http://www.northeastbiblechapel.org/#!/wec-conference-2013/c1h9j>. Great teaching by many good speakers. Take the time to peruse and listen to some excellent messages!



BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP RESOURCES

(This series was originally given at Emmaus Bible College's 2011 Iron Sharpens Iron Conference. Their message is condensed into three articles, the first of which follows.)

Paul: In a relay race, the incoming runner has the eyes. The outgoing runner provides the target. The incoming runner's job is to place the baton in the left hand of the outgoing runner. Immediately after receiving the baton, the outgoing runner switches it to his right hand so he can pass it to the next runner.

The Word of God instructs us to pass another kind of baton:

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ...

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 1:5; 2:1-2 ESV)

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (Deut. 6:5-7)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more. They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no service." (Numbers 8:23-26)

God wants us to pass the baton of

servant leadership to the next generation.

1. Why must we pass the baton?

In the race of life, the stakes are great. If we are to live out the theme of this conference: "God so loved the world. Do we?" and fulfill our role in making disciples of all nations, we must pass the baton of godly, visionary leadership.

Nate: If we are to pass the baton of leadership, we must overcome certain fears. Where do we sometimes fail to pass the baton? We fail to pass it in our

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homes, local assemblies, and ministries. Those who cling to the baton drop it at death, having failed to pass it. Why such failure? Let's look at a few fears.

The first fear as to why we don't pass the baton is **the fear of irrelevancy**.

In Joshua 5 we find Joshua outside Jericho where he encounters the commander of the Lord. He asks him, "Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?" The commander answers, "No, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have come." Sometimes we want to know if God is with us in what we are doing, when what we need to know is whether or not we are with *Him* in *His* plan. If you're living an existence that will end when you breathe your last, then you're not plugged into His plan. His plan is the baton-passing plan, a plan for His glory, a plan for people from every nation to be one day united around His throne.

Consider Barnabas and Saul in the book of Acts. In chapter 11, the church in Antioch is flourishing. So what does Barnabas do? Sit back and enjoy the success? No, "Barnabas went to Tarsus (a wearying, 330-mile journey) to look for Paul." He then brings him to Antioch

and gets him involved. In chapters 11, 12, and 13, it's "Barnabas and Paul (Saul)", "Barnabas and Paul." But in chapter 13, something changes. Paul comes to the forefront. And from there on, for the most part, it's "Paul and Barnabas", "Paul and Barnabas." What happened? The baton was passed. Barnabas was not afraid to release control. He was not afraid that passing the baton might make him irrelevant. If you fear becoming irrelevant, you probably already are. If you belong to Jesus Christ, you have a baton to pass. I don't care if you are 10 years old, or 90 – you have a baton to pass.

One baton we can focus on is reaching the world with God's grace and truth. Sometimes we view the church as a holy huddle—a place where we come to get encouragement and that's it. But

the church is far more than that. The church of Jesus Christ is God's plan for blessing the world. We must not look to the United Nations, or governments, or worldly organizations for solutions. When we see suffering around the world, the chaos in the Middle East, conflicts in our own country and homes, the solution is in our midst. In the feeding of the 5000, Jesus' disciples came to Him and said, "Send the multitudes away so they can go and find food." Jesus told them, "The multitudes don't need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14). Musician Steve Camp said, "Don't tell them Jesus loves them until you're ready to love them too. Until your heart breaks from the sorrow and the pain they're going through."

My question is: Are you relevant? Are you relevant in your local church? Are you passing that baton? Are you relevant in your home? Are you passing the baton? Are you relevant in your ministry? If we're not in the constant phase of preparing others to receive the baton of leadership, we're stagnant and on the verge of extinction.

2. What is the baton?

Paul: In a relay race it's the round

Passing the Baton of Leadership (continued from page 2)

cylinder you pass to the next runner. Let me say one thing that the baton is not. It is not our traditions. The rabbis of old had a saying: “Build a fence around the law.” The Pharisees did that. They came up with their own laws and traditions, supposedly to protect God’s Law. If we’re not careful, we can fall into the same rut—making our traditions as sacred as the Word of God. One brother put it like this, “I see a generation of people who are trying to keep going the vision of dead men.” That is not the baton we want to pass.

The baton we are to pass is different than traditions. In the race of life it’s making disciples who will be able to disciple others also. It’s the gospel; it’s passing on God’s truth and the life that goes with it to the next generation. The Great Commission is about making disciples, marking them in baptism, and moulding them to observe all that the Lord has commanded.

In 2 Timothy 2 we read of Paul’s passing the baton to Timothy. He says, “My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” that is, be empowered by walking with God. Be strong in your relationship with God. You can’t pass to

others what you don’t possess yourself. Paul also told Timothy, “The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruit.” You must feed yourself.

At age 20, my Christian employer passed me a baton by asking me to teach the book of Romans at morning coffee break to any of his employees who cared to attend. In the final chapter, among the many salutations, Paul sends his greetings to Philologus, a name meaning, “Lover of the Word.” I told the men, “That is what I want to be: a lover of God’s Word.” That’s the baton too, isn’t it? To help others love the Word; to help others fall in love with the Word Himself—Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Paul speaks of the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. That, too, is the baton. So is having a vision for the Lord and the lost world around us. In short, Paul told Timothy: You must invest in people. “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

Living in Senegal, West Africa, we’ve learned a lot from the Senegalese people. While Americans tend to be time

-oriented, Senegalese are relationship-oriented. For example, when you see a dollar bill, what do you think of? Perhaps, “I could buy a hamburger with it, or put a few drops of gas in my car.” But a Senegalese may reason, “I could strengthen relationships with that dollar.” Most Senegalese are poor. So a young man might think, “If I give this money to my dad it will help with the daily needs and it will strengthen our relationship. It will make me relevant and more important in the family because I’ve helped out.”

Passing the baton requires building relationships with people. The Lord Jesus chose 12 disciples to be with Him for three years. In the context of a relationship, He moulded them into godly, servant leaders who would turn the world “upside down” for God. That should be our focus as well, passing on the baton of discipleship.



Practical Application The Syllabus—a Helpful Tool

by Jack Spender

Why would anyone want a syllabus in a church? Aren’t such things supposed to be kept in schools? How about the leading of the Holy Spirit; do we no longer depend on that? These are some of the questions one can face when discussing the value of a syllabus to arrange and explain Sunday messages for the local church.

Not everyone will be open to the idea, but for elders who are interested, here are some things to help evaluate this tool when seeking to bring blessing to people through the Sunday Bible hour - or any teaching meeting for that matter.

Definition

A typical dictionary defines a syllabus as an outline and summary of topics to be covered in an education or training course. Three things stand out immediately. The first is that the syllabus looks

to the future; people can plan ahead. The second is that the syllabus provides an orderly overview of the proposed study, so that the hearer can get the big picture, and know where the material is heading. The third is contained in the word “training”: a serious study is being undertaken for serious students. Sound interesting? Read on.

Objections

Probably the most serious objection is that scheduling ahead might quench the leading of the Holy Spirit. Every elder must weigh this question as it touches the heart of assembly life. Allowing the Spirit of God freedom to lead is a vital part of the health of any church. But the question need not be seen as “to lead or not to lead.” The real question may be how can He best lead?

Based on the principle of open partic-

ipation by ordinary brothers in 1 Cor. 14:26, churches seeking to follow the NT pattern for church order have defended the leading of the Spirit through unarranged participation in the remembrance meeting where worship is taking place, and rightly so. But where the need is for orderly instruction which seeks to cover the whole counsel of God in Bible lessons, could the Spirit of God not lead as each section is covered, one piece at a time in a “precept upon precept, line upon line” (Is. 28:10) approach? Many think He can do so—and with good reason.

The problem with using only ministry “as led,” is not with the Spirit’s ability to lead but with man’s ability to follow! Many elders will admit that certain favored topics have been presented frequently while difficult fundamental doctrines have been neglected for years. Could the Holy Spirit not lead the speaker and bring great blessing where elders

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have decided on a consecutive approach in ministry?

Benefits

A number of potential benefits can be expected when the assembly plans out and reveals its teaching schedule in advance. Giving people the opportunity to read and reflect on the passage in advance is a huge benefit which alone justifies the idea. Further, the elders who presumably oversee platform ministry may choose sections or invite speakers based upon gift or experience in the subject being covered.

Another benefit is that longer books in Scripture may be studied. When I was a boy I remember the wry comments that we were “experts in the little books but ignorant of the bigger books of the Bible.” If a man proposed to take up Philippians, this was sure to be a blessing. But if he proposed to study through Genesis or Isaiah, he was suspect of wanting to become the “Pastor” of the church.

Having an outline will also help younger men in the assembly who are learning to preach as they can work on a small part of the whole in company with older, more experienced men. In this way, over time, an assembly can establish a very fine library of messages on books of Scriptures and important Bible doctrines.

A Workable Plan

Making this work is not difficult but it takes some planning. Choosing a book or subject that will meet the present need of the assembly is important. Once that decision has been made, one or two

brothers who are good students of the Word can work out a simple breakdown of sections or chapters matching these with available dates. Early on, this should be presented as a “rough draft” which can be edited by others for improvements.

Balance in message size is crucial; going too fast so that the people cannot keep up and digest the material, and going too slow so that the effort gets bogged down in details will hamper the outcome. In our assembly, we learned by experience to allow an unscheduled Sunday at various intervals along the syllabus to allow for special (unforeseen) needs like a “snow day,” or a visiting missionary, or the need to address an urgent matter that has come up. Having enough structure to keep the interest and enough flexibility to adjust to unforeseen circumstances is a skill to be developed with time.

In our particular assembly, the elders have decided to take up the gospel of John on Sunday mornings in the coming year. Normally the series could take 15 - 20 messages running from January through about April. Squeezing such a great book into this timeframe seemed unwise; yet dividing it into a 2-year plan also was not favored. After some discussion, the decision was made to cover the early chapters taking a “summer break” when many people are away, and resuming to finish the later chapters in the fall. Through liberty and flexibility unity was preserved.

Once the material is settled and put down into a simple syllabus, it is made

available to the people in the church with the request that they keep their calendar dates free if possible to be consistent in attendance. For us, the next item would be to schedule a special study for all the men which we call the “marathon study.” It is held early on a Saturday morning to take a look at the “big picture” of the entire book, actually going chapter by chapter, and providing opportunity for men to discuss the high points. Some brothers may actually express an interest in a particular passage which is noted by the elders who will eventually invite speakers.

Conclusion

The apostle Paul had some good things to say about church order (I Cor. 14:40; Col. 2:5) and having a syllabus for some of the messages is one good way to display it.

Of course there may still be significant stretches of time when speakers can choose their own subjects, and probably a combination of approaches will lend itself to many.

Looking back over the years of following an outline or syllabus, it has been fascinating to see how the subjects and passages prayerfully chosen have harmonized beautifully with the needs and experiences of the church at the time, making us all realize once again that the God who knows the future can lead moment by moment or months in advance. This should not be a surprise, but has always been refreshing.



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Specific Bible versions used are indicated at the first quotation in each article.

Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.

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