

# A Flexible Framework for Equipping Christian Laborers

## *Removing the Leadership Bottleneck*

Prepared by Todd Stewart (*heavily influenced by Gary DeLashmutt of Xenos*)

July 1, 2005

### Assumptions

1. *We are called to give ourselves to equipping laborers for the harvest.*
  - Jesus intentionally trained laborers:
    - Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16
  - Jesus calls us to do likewise:
    - Matthew 9:36-38; Matthew 28:16-20
  - Paul intentionally trained laborers:
    - Acts 16:1-3; Acts 20:4
  - Paul calls us to do likewise:
    - Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:1-2
  
2. *Even as we equip others, we are both ultimately still disciples of Jesus.*
  
3. *It is usually best to equip laborers who are in your LIFE Group.*
  - Allows for supervised equipping opportunities.
  - Allows you to see how the emerging laborer interacts with a variety of people in a variety of situations over the course of time.
  - Allows you to model & value equipping before others in the LIFE Group.
  - LIFE Group provides a good opportunity for the one being equipped to start equipping others.
  - Provides a good opportunity for the one being equipped to develop into a co-leader.
  
4. *There are several differences between helping and equipping:*

HELPING	EQUIPPING
Focused on general care for younger disciples	Intentionally developing Christian laborers
Focused on the person's spiritual growth	Focused on helping & equipping others
Hoping to persuade people to become laborers	Developing someone who has become a laborer
Unconditional - without expectation of commitment	Conditional - defined & agreed upon expectations
Sporadic & Ongoing	Consistent & for a period of time
Some Examples of Helping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone read the Bible &amp; pray</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone be assured of salvation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone learn how to develop Christian friendships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone with their marriage</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone with habitual sin</li> </ul>	Some Examples of Equipping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Studying a book of the Bible together</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coach someone as they help or train others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read an equipping-focused book together</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Equip someone to share the gospel with their neighbors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teaching someone how to teach the Bible</li> </ul>

5. *Helping and equipping are rarely mutually exclusive:*
  - Some helping happens in the midst of equipping
  - Some equipping happens in the midst of helping
  
6. *Helping is really important too!!!*

## Selecting Someone to Equip

INADEQUATE CRITERIA	ADEQUATE CRITERIA
Age (spiritual or biological)	Hunger for the Word
Spiritual gifting	Sharing Christ & Serving Others
Personality	Makes time for growth
Personal affinity	Takes steps of faith
Secular success	Authentic about failures, but progressing

### *Why is selection so important?*

- It is a huge, time-consuming, multi-year commitment!
- In saying “yes” to one person, you are invariably saying “no” to another person.
- The multiplication of your ministry and your LIFE Group is heavily dependent upon the quality of your equipping relationships.
- Jesus demonstrated its importance by staying up all night praying through His selection process (see Luke 6:12-16)!

### *What do you do if you are unsure about a person?*

- Initiate irregular and temporary 1-on-1 times.
- Give the person an assignment & see if he/she comes through on it.
- Get counsel from other godly people.
- Flavor all the above with prayerfulness.

### *Won't others get jealous? Doesn't this show favoritism?*

- A certain amount of “holy jealousy” is good for people, if it evokes in them a desire to make progress in godliness.
- Yes, it does show favoritism towards those who are most hungry for the things of God. But, hey, Jesus showed the same favoritism!

## Getting Started

1. *Clearly explain your purpose*
  - Cast vision for them of the importance of equipping
  - Share what you have seen in them
  - Share what they can become
2. *Clarify your expectations*
  - Make them few
  - Make them clear
  - Make honesty a priority
3. *Explain the four areas you'll be working on together:*

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>CHARACTER</b>
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>PRAYER</b>

4. *Ask them if they really want to do it...and allow time for an informed decision.*
5. *Fill in a present step for each area...and both keep for future reference.*

## Working the Framework

### KNOWLEDGE

#### Goals:

- Developing a biblical worldview
- Understanding how to read & study the Bible

#### Suggestions & Thoughts:

- Daily Bible reading plan
- Read & discuss a biblical book together
- Overview the Bible & each book
- Read & discuss Christian books
- Discuss and/or take a LIFE Institute class together
- Recommend books, CD's, etc. for private study

### CHARACTER

#### Goals:

- Building godly character:
  - Developing **FAITH**:
    - Learning to value what God values
    - Living a life that shows you trust God & His words
  - Developing **HOPE**:
    - Learning to draw strength from God in difficulty
    - Living a life that is invested in eternity
  - Developing **LOVE**:
    - Learning how to relate to all people in godly ways
    - Living a life that loves all people well

#### Suggestions & Thoughts:

- Model authenticity & vulnerability
- Keep the focus on becoming a more effective laborer, not merely personal healing
- Resistance without replacement is futile
- Model God's grace & patience, but challenge when needed
- Confer & refer when outsiders can be part of the solution

### SKILLS

#### Goals:

- Develop & enhance personal ministry

### Suggestions & Thoughts:

- Set current ministry goals
- Evaluate progress & give feedback
- Help them develop a process for achieving goals
- Teach them ministry principles in addition to providing specific problem-solving
- Help them live out of & develop their SHAPE:
  - Spiritual gifts
  - Heart
  - Abilities
  - Personality
  - Experiences
- Help them minimize their weaknesses
- Take them with you whenever possible
- Teach them how to handle ministry success AND failure

### **PRAYER**

#### Goals:

- Demonstrate a dependent lifestyle of prayer
- Help them realize that “apart from Him we can do nothing” of eternal value

#### Suggestions & Thoughts:

- Our prayers tend to demonstrate what we really value
- Cast vision for them in prayer together
- Always pray together:
  - Sometimes at the beginning
  - Sometimes at the end
  - Sometimes spontaneously
  - Sometimes as you walk or drive
  - Sometimes on longer retreats together
- Season the other 3 areas (knowledge, character, skills) with prayer

### **Closing Thoughts on Equipping Laborers**

- Don't just focus on your areas of strength at the expense of the other 3 areas.
- Sometimes you must move back to helping for a period of time, but always push for it to move back to equipping if he/she is willing and able.
- Don't stop just because he/she is equipping and/or helping others. Wait until multiple generations are flourishing.
- Relish in the moment when he/she becomes a consistent co-laborer.
- Celebrate his/her progress through verbal affirmation & by transitioning the relationship when appropriate.