

Jesus as Master Educator

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God wants you to learn Jesus as Master Educator

“People do not care what you know,
until they know that you care.”

1. Teaching and Life

As far as Christians are concerned, the issue of education must be addressed from the divine revelation of the Word of God. The New Testament text which most clearly teaches the divine inspiration of Scripture also clearly teaches the Bible’s role in education. “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Paul is concerned not only with imparting knowledge about the Bible or with academic education or the formation of character or spiritual qualities, but with a comprehensive training which covers all aspects of life which thoroughly equips the Christian “for every good work.” If full-time service in the church or in missions is to be worthwhile, the Bible is necessary in the preparation for carrying out that service. Not only the biblical *content* important, but also biblical instructions on *how* that content is to be communicated.

Many Christians have a split faith! Because they distinguish between character, ethics, doctrine and life, they lack a comprehensive unity in their lives—at least as far as education is concerned. The “Enlightenment” (a term which summarizes a multi-faceted development) has created a division between thought and action which disagrees with biblical teaching. Ever since, a university professor’s life and character are considered insignificant to his scientific achievements, even when reality—even if only the reality of his students or colleagues—catches up with science.

“Perception”, “learning”, “understanding”, “teaching”, “training” etc. are all terms which the Bible relates to intellectual aspects as well as to the ability to apply what one has

learned.¹ The Old Testament usage of the word “to know” to describe consummation of the marital relationship demonstrates this aspect very well (Gen. 1:4,17,25; 19:8; 24:16; 1 Kings 1:4),² for this “knowledge” involves the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, mental and physical experience of the individual.

Countless scriptures point to the indivisibility of doctrine and life, but one example will do. Paul tells Timothy, a colleague and successor he had trained himself, “*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine,*” (1 Tim. 4:16; see also 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:10; 3:-4:5; 1 Thess. 1:1-2:12). For Paul, it is obvious that Timothy’s responsibility for himself and for several churches includes resistance to doctrinal error.

The Book of Proverbs is the Bible’s greatest handbook for education. Its description of comprehensive training includes the ability to be independent in daily life and to cooperate with others by working with them, caring for them, making peace and instituting justice and righteousness. Central to all is the “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10; 1:7; 15:33; Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10). The goal of Proverbs’ training program is clearly to lead the student to “wisdom”, the pre-requisite for independence, by instructing him to obey the rules of his instructors and the Law of God. Wisdom is, of course, not only an intellectual exercise, but also the ability to apply knowledge to life and to personal relationships (see Prov. 4:1-9).

In the Old Testament, the term “disciple” or “student” is often used to designate the believer. “The Lord God has given me the ear of the learned ... He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned” (Isa. 50:4-5). The word “disciple”, was derived from the superlative form (*discipulus*)³ of the Latin word “junior” (an apprentice, a pupil or a subordinate⁴) and means “a pupil”. The New Testament first uses the term *mathetes* to designate the twelve apostles (beginning with John 2:2 and in general in this gospel) and then to describe all followers of Jesus (Luke 6:17, Acts 9:25). The Great Commission, which also uses this word, expressly speaks of teaching and of doing what has been learned, “... make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ...” (Mt. 28:18-20). Christians are students who never stop learning, a characteristic typical of wisdom. The more one knows, the more one realizes how little one knows and how much more there is to learn, “... The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:8-10).

2. The Training of the Twelve Apostles.

The best example for the significance of training and education is the training of the

1 See: Laurence O. Richards. *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1975) pp. 32-24.

2 Friso Melzer. *Das Wort in den Wörtern: Die deutsche Sprache im Lichte der Christus-Nachfolge: Ein theo-philoslogisches Wörterbuch* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C. B. Mohr, 1965) p. 113.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 237-238.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

twelve apostles, which was built on a detailed pedagogical program which we can only sketch here. More detail would require information on the chronology of the material Jesus covered in the three years and a description of His behavior in individual and group counseling. At any rate, His program dovetailed instruction and life, everyday life and lecture, teaching and individual counseling and resulted in a comprehensive education.⁵

The Twelve had already heard Jesus preach before their conversion and first became general followers of Jesus. Not until later were they elected out of the larger group to become apostles. (Examples for the general calling are the calling of Peter in John 1:35-42 and Luke 5:1-11; the calling of Levi/Matthew in Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32. Compare the calling of other disciples in Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20).

All three synoptic gospels describe the special calling of the Twelve, including a complete list of their names (Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-17, Luke 6:12-16). Let us take a look at the three accounts. “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Matthew 10:1. The list follows in verse 2-4). In Luke 6:12, Jesus prays all night, then calls His disciples and chooses twelve, “whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:13. The list of names follows in verses 14-16). Jesus must have had more followers than the Twelve; Luke 6:17 distinguishes between the “great multitude of people” and the “crowd of the disciples”, which also included women who accompanied the Lord (Luke 8:2-3). When Jesus spoke of the requirements of discipleship, many turned away, but many, including the Twelve, remained (John 6:66-69^e). Mark tells us, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons” (Mark 3:13-16. The list of names follows in verses 16-19). Jesus therefore chose the Twelve out of a larger group of disciples, but this last text describes the process and the goal of His selection.

I would now like to summarize the characteristics of the training program given to the Twelve as described in Mark 3:14. Four factors were of importance in the selection of the Apostles:

1) Jesus limited his group of pupils to a small number, for, just as a father can only properly care for a small number of children, He could provide adequate training to only a few followers at a time.

The Twelve had been chosen to be with Him and to share His life, but no one can share his life with a larger group of people. Marriage, the closest human relationship, is limited to two people. The number of children in a family is larger, but still manageable—no

5 The best study is still: A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publ., 1971 (originally publ. 1894).

6 Unlike the other Gospels. the Book of John uses the term 'disciple' to designate only the Twelve.

individual could carry out his parental responsibilities sufficiently if he had 40 children—only an orphanage or juvenile institution would try. (Although I would never criticize the self-sacrificing labor of the social workers employed in such institutions, I must note that they cannot fully provide the same intensive care which parents can give to the smaller number of children in a family.) Jesus' conscious restriction can also be seen in the decreasing concentric circles of the groups of His friends, the smaller groups having more intensive contact with Him. He even had a favorite, John, the “disciple whom He loved” (John 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20, 19:27). The two brother-pairs, James and John, and Peter and Andrew, shared many events not experienced by the others (Matthew 4:21, 10:2, Mark 1:19, 3:17, 10:35,41, Luke 5:10, 6:14, 9:54, Acts 1:13, 12:2). All four brothers were present in Mark 1:29, 13:3, three of them (with Andrew missing) in Mark 5:37, 14:33 and Luke 8:51 and particularly at the Transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-3, Mark 9:1-4, Luke 9:28-30 and later, as a pillar of the church in Galatians 2:9).

The Concentric Circles around Jesus

Largest Number (= all), loosest relationship

- * The crowd
- * the group of disciples
- * all the disciples who accompanied Him, including the women
- * the Seventy
- * the Twelve
- * the four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John
(the two pairs of brothers or, sometimes only Peter, James and John)
- * His favorite disciple, John

Smallest Number (= one), closest relationship

2) Jesus chose the Twelve, “that they might be with Him and that He might send them out”. The goal of the intensive fellowship with Jesus and the dependence on Him was preparation for their mission.

This intense relationship with Jesus was not the final goal of the disciples' training. Rather, they were to go out alone and continue His work. Just as He had been “sent” by His Father (John 3:16-18, 8:16,26,29, 12:45-49, 16:5,28, 17:3,8) and sends out the Holy Spirit in His place (John 14:15-31, 16:5-11, 12-17), He transfers His commission to the apostles. In John 17:18, He tells His Father, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world”. In John 20:21, He tells the Twelve, “As the Father has sent

Me, I also send you”.

Jesus had intended from the very beginning to prepare them for the Great Commission, to “... make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ...” (Matthew 28:18-20). They were to do the same thing in the world that He had done with them—preach the Gospel to the masses, elect disciples out of the larger group of converts, and by sharing their lives and by teaching, train the chosen to become spiritual leaders.⁷

His prayer in John 17 clearly demonstrates that besides achieving our salvation on the Cross, He had another specific assignment to be carried out with the Twelve. In verse 4, He says, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” and adds the reason, “Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have know surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me” (Verses 7-8). Jesus wanted the disciples not only to know what He knew, but to live as He had lived. The goal of His training program was for them to follow in His steps (except for His divinity and for His sacrificial death on the Cross), as He had repeatedly taught them.

The context of Luke 6:40 is particularly interesting (“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.”). In verse 39,⁸ He asks, “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?” Blind leaders of the blind are people who may speak well, but are poor role-models, for they have nothing worth copying.

Important is the fact that both aspects belong together, “*that they might be with Him and that He might sent them out.*” Such close ties between teacher and pupil are only justified when they are intended to help the pupil become independent. Raising children properly always includes a certain tension in the development from the helpless infant completely dependent on its parents to the independent adult. Every tie, including the insistence on obedience, is directed toward independence, not only in child raising, but also the training of workers in the Kingdom of God. From the very beginning of His training program, even as He was calling His disciples, Jesus had the Great Commission in view. He knew what they could not yet see, that He had chosen them in order to train them as the future leaders in church and mission field, for the day that He would leave them.

3) Jesus’ training program was not haphazard, but followed a clear plan. The disciples were to be trained for the mission field by living and working several years with the prototype of the missionary, Jesus Himself. The chronological order of His program makes this clear. First, He preached alone, then preached while the disciples observed. Next He let them preach while He observed. After that He sent them out in

⁷ See Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelisation*, Old Tappan: Revell, 1963.

⁸ Lawrence O. Richards. *A Theology of Christian Education, op.cit.*, pp. 54-56.

groups of two and discussed the results with them. This first, short term assignment is described in Matthew 10:1-11, Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6. Finally He sent them out alone,⁹ (remaining with them as Risen Lord - Matthew 28:18-20). The Twelve continued by doing the same with other Christians.

On the Way to Independence

- 1) Jesus preaches by Himself
 - 2) Jesus preaches while His disciples observe
 - 3) The disciples preach while Jesus observes
 - 4) The disciples are sent out for a short term assignment
 - 5) The disciples are sent out on a permanent assignment
 - 6) The disciples preach while others observe
 - 7) et cetera
-
- 1) I
 - 2) I and You
 - 3) You and I
 - 4) You try alone, I comment
 - 5) You are completely alone
 - 6) You and another
 - 7) Another and you
 - 8) et cetera.

⁹ The first, short term assignment is described in Matthew 10:1-11, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6. See also the sending out of the Seventy in Luke 10:1-16 and His discussion with them about their experiences in Luke 10:17-21.

This scheme works well, not only in the training of church workers, but in every kind of education which sets itself the proper goal, independence under God.

4) Jesus' training program for the disciples included the full scope of instruction and life, theory and practice, individual and group counseling, personal and public activity, activity and rest, profession and private life. Teaching and counseling formed a single unit.

These apparent contradictions were not compartmentalized into separate areas of life, but were carried out at one time, depending on the demands and possibilities of the situation.

3. Paul and his COLLEAGUES

Beside Jesus and the Twelve, the best-known example for a discipling process which includes life and instruction, teaching and counseling, pattern and imitation, is Paul's work with his colleagues, which we know only from a few "chains of role models".

Examples of Chains of Role Models

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges: Moses - Joshua - the elders

1 Peter 5:1-3: Jesus - Peter - the elders - the disciples

2 Timothy 2:2: Paul - Timothy - "faithful men" - "others also"

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7: Paul - Timothy & Silvanus - Thessalonians - Province of Achaia - the whole earth

Paul did not work alone, but was accompanied by assistants or colleagues (Acts 17:15 for example), who received spiritual training while with him. Before beginning his evangelistic work in Ephesus, he waited until his colleagues had arrived: "When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*" (Acts 18:5) Even after he, the apostle, had dreamed of a man calling him to Macedonia, he consulted with the others before starting the journey: "Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them." (Acts 16:10). These assistants were generally people he had led to Christ and had trained from the very beginning, Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2,18,26; Romans 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). There were apostles of the churches as well (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25), missionaries sent to take responsibility for the churches Paul had founded.¹⁰ Besides his assistants, Paul concentrated on training other disciples, especially the elders of the new churches. He ordained elders at a surprisingly early stage in the work (Acts 14:22-23), usually the first converts, and remained for only a short time in one area, for

¹⁰ Thomas Schirrmacher. *Der Römerbrief*. 2 Vols, (Neuhausen, Germany: Hänssler, 1993) Vol. 1, p. 291-299.

he expected the elders to carry on his work. His longest stay, three and a half years, in one area was in Ephesus, and that was probably punctuated by long interruptions.¹¹

The Epistles to the Thessalonians are the most beautiful testimony that not only Paul, but also his colleagues (Silvanus and Timothy), not only preached the Gospel, but were prepared to share their own lives (1 Thessalonians 2:8) as models. Naturally all three proclaimed with words and with doctrine. Otherwise, how would their audience understand the meaning of their example? These letters demonstrate how Timothy and Silvanus, trained by Paul as their model, became models themselves for the Christians in Thessalonica who were also to become models in their turn.

Silvanus and Timothy are included, for 1 Thessalonians 1:6 tells us, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord”. Many have found this statement offensive. How can Paul compare himself with Jesus? But the Scripture itself recommends models to emulate God's example. And is that not always so? A child's understanding of God depends on that of his parents, whether good or bad. Spiritual children are influenced by the good or bad example of their spiritual parents relationship with God. Everyone is a role model: we cannot choose whether we want to be an example or not, but only between being a good example or a poor one. Every church leader and every politician is an example and can only choose what kind of example he wants to be. This is particularly true for theological training.

Doctrine and Life, Model and Imitation in the Letters to the Thessalonians

1 Thess. 1:5-9: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

1Thessalonians. 2:7-12 “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You *are* witnesses, and

11 Heinz Warnecke. Thomas Schirrmacher. “Plädoyer für die historische Glaubwürdigkeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe.” in *War Paulus wirklich auf Malta* ((Neuhausen, Germany: Hänssler, 1992) pp. 223-227.

God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

1 Thess. 2:14: (to the church in Thessalonika) “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans.”

2 Thess 3:7: “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;”

2Thess. 3:9: “not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”

There are many studies about Paul’s opponents, but his friends and colleagues have been greatly ignored.¹² There are two publications on Paul’s colleagues, both written from a different point of view.¹³ Wolff-Henning Ollrog assumes that Paul’s use of many assistants was not made by a random decision, but a deliberate missionary strategy. Beginning with the historical information given in the New Testament and a study of the terminology *synergos* (“colleague”), this revised dissertation arrives at three circles of assistants.: “the closest colleagues”, who accompanied Paul continually, “the independent colleagues”, who aided him in specific, “chance” situations, and the “envoys of the local churches”, delegated by their congregations to accompany the apostle in order to take part in his missionary efforts. The last-mentioned group made cooperation possible between congregation, assistants and missions. Ollrog concludes with a study of the theologies of the individual and a discussion of Paul’s evaluation of them. The book opens new fields of investigation and uncovers relationships overlooked by traditional studies, but is unfortunately fragmentary, since the writer rejects 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians and the pastoral letters (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) as non-Pauline¹⁴, thus ignoring quite a bit of material. Many of the questions he fails to resolve could have been answered, if a rigorously critical method had not eliminated authentic material. The Book of Acts suffers a similar fate, for Ollrog fails to take it seriously, although he considers it to be the work of Luke. Ollrog always seems to know why Luke supposedly distorted his facts.

This last problem does not occur in Bönig’s book.¹⁵ Concentrating on their relationship to

12 Wolf-Henning Ollrog. *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 50 (Neukirchen, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979) p. 3.

13 *Ibid.*, and Manfred Bönig. *Wir haben die Welt erobert: Die Mitarbeiter des Apostel Paulus* ((Witten, Germany: Bundes Verlag, 1980).

14 Ollrog, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

15 Manfred Bönig, *op. cit.*

the apostle, the writer describes sixteen of Paul's assistants. Although Bönig provides an excellent study derived from a thorough study of all New Testament sources, he fails to consider Paul's strategy in his choice of methods. Again, we encounter the old problem: the liberal critic provides an excellent study which opens new dimensions of the New Testament, but ignores too much material to break through traditional barriers, while a conservative author gives us a work which is edifying but insufficient. Until it becomes possible to unite academic thoroughness and conservative interpretation, the interested reader must read both books and reap the best out of them.

One might object that this intensive sharing of life and work with a small number of spiritual children is restricted to Jesus and to Paul. 2 Timothy 2:2 refutes this assumption, however, by commanding discipling as an ongoing program for church and missions: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also". Jesus' example is made into an obligatory training program. Christ's church expands through the intensive occupation of mature, spiritually minded Christians with small groups of believers, not by the attempts of one responsible leader who tries to do justice to dozens, hundreds or even thousands at once. True spiritual growth and fruitful training occurs when spiritually-minded, mature Christians concentrate on a small group of spiritual children, with whom they share life and instruction until the children have become independent adults, themselves capable of taking on responsibility for others. This is the best way to fulfill the Great Commission, "... Make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Definition of Discipling¹⁶

Every line describes a major point

- Discipling others
- is the process,
- by which a Christian with a
- life worth emulating
- commits himself
- for an extended period of time
- to a few individuals
- who have been won to Christ,
- the purpose being
- to aid
- and to guide
- their growth to spiritual maturity
- so that they can reproduce themselves

16 This definition is an adapted version of the definition in Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1979. p. 29. The book is a good introduction to discipling in the local church.

- in a third spiritual generation,
- which they build up through discipling.

We find many chains of models in the Bible.

5. Having a role model, being a role model

Scripture considers role models a significant element of preparing the individual for independence. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, describing his vision of the renewed Church, writes:

“The Church cannot underestimate the value of human ‘role models’ (originating with Jesus and so highly valued by Paul!): not terminology, but the ‘role model’ gives its word emphasis and power. (I will write on role models in the New Testament especially! We have almost lost the idea!)”¹⁷

Peter is in agreement with Jesus and with Paul when he gives the elders the commandment, not to rule, but to win their authority by their example. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;” (1 Peter 5:1-3).

The best overview of the New Testament teaching on examples and imitation can be developed by collecting all references to the appropriate terminology.

Who is a Role Model?

The following texts all use the word “model” (Greek *typos*, *hypotyposo*) and the terms “imitator” or “to imitate” (Greek *mimetes*, *mimeistai* or *symmimetai*).

1. God

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children”.

2. Jesus Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:6 “And you became followers of us and of the Lord.”

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Widerstand und Ergebung: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft* (Munich, Germany: Chr. Kaiser, 1958[8]) p. 262. As far as I know, Bonhoeffer never managed to write on the subject.

1 Corinthians 11:1 "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

3. The Apostles etc.

Philippians 3:17 "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern."

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia."

2 Thessalonians 3:7 "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you."

2 Thessalonians 3:9 "... not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us."

1 Corinthians 11:1 "Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ."

1 Corinthians 4:16 "Therefore I urge you, imitate me."

4. Men and women of history

Hebrews 6:12 "... that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Hebrews 13:7-(8) "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

5. Our spiritual father, who introduced us to Biblical truth

1 Corinthians 4:(14)-16 "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me."

6. The elders

1 Peter 5:(1)-3 "The elders who are among you I exhort, ... Shepherd the flock of God ... not as being lords over those entrusted to you; but being examples to the flock."

7. Young men who are true

1 Timothy 4:12 "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

8. Other churches

1 Thessalonians 2:14 "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of

God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus”

1 Thessalonians 1:7 “so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.”

9. The Old Testament and its people

1 Corinthians 10:6 “Now these things became our examples”

1 Corinthians 10:11 “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (Compare the Old Testament examples in verses 1-13)

10. Sound Doctrine

Romans 6:17 “... yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”

2 Timothy 1:13 “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus.”

11. All which is good

3 John 11 “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.”

Titus 2:7 “... in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works.”

Being an example does not require perfection, as Lawrence O. Richards, the American theologian and educator, explains. He describes the role model as an example not of perfection, but of growth (or change).¹⁸ When Scripture itself assumes that mature Christians should serve others as role models, any opposing arguments or fears prove to be excuses which appear more pious than the Bible itself.

In 1 Corinthians 4:14-16, Paul describes his relationship to the Church in Corinth: “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Paul calls the congregation “his beloved children”, himself their father. Because he is their spiritual father, he must admonish them (verse 14). Surprisingly, Paul not only identifies himself with the other Christians who serve the Corinthian believers, but he also claims a higher position. He distinguishes between himself and these “instructors” (Greek *paidagogos*). This term referred to slaves who taught children and is the origin for our term “pedagogy”. These instructors were responsible for the intellectual education of their pupils. Paul is saying, “Even if you had 10,000 excellent teachers, who taught you only good and correct things, that would not change the fact that I am your father. From your father, you learn not only doctrine, but also life. And a father questions not only his

18 Lawrence O. Richards. *A Theology of Christian Education*, *op.cit.*, p 142.

children's thinking, but also their actions. He is not only present when all is going well, but also in emergencies and in danger.

Lawrence O. Richards once described the difference between modern pedagogical methods and those of the Bible in a way which reflects Paul's ideas. "Much of education is concerned with helping people know what their teachers know; Christian education is concerned with helping people become what their teachers are."¹⁹

In the world, a pupil is often expected to know what his teacher knows, but in the church a student should live like his teacher lives. As Lawrence O. Richards²⁰ reminds us, Jesus told His disciples, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Mt. 10:24-25). After washing His disciples' feet, He tells them, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (John 13:15-16).

Of course we need knowledge! Without it a people or a church will lose control (Proverbs 29:18 yyy Heb. lack or lose restraint), but if a church is dead, knowledge is of no use. Has the modern church neglected role modeling? Isn't it easier to refer to good books or sermons, than to share one's life with others as an example? If we want new believers to grow in Christ and remain in the faith, however, we must take an interest in their lives. In order to do that, we must ourselves have a personal relationship to Christ and must live according to his law. Can we still challenge others to imitate our example (1 Cor. 4:16)? Is our Christian life worth imitating? Do others experience enough of our lives that they can imitate us in a scriptural fashion?

Theological instructors must become strong fathers and mothers who no longer share only knowledge, but who are available in all aspects of life.

Not by chance does the book of Proverbs give the teacher of wisdom the title "Father" (4:1), and call his pupil his son (13:1; 1:10.15). Elijah and Elisha are also addressed as "my father" by their "children", the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 20:35; 2:3.57; 4:1.38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1).²¹

Discipling is significant for the training of spiritual leaders and workers in the church and in world missions. Although the examples of Jesus and Paul, or of Old Testament leaders, can only be imperfectly carried over into modern life, this is still the best way to train and form the leaders of the future.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

20 See Lawrence O. Richards. *Ibid.* See also Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), and Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Personal Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).

21 Hans Walter Wolff. *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* p. 263.