

1 – Why Are We Here?

A reformatted presentation of Relational Elders Training
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Relational Leadership Training

Developing Disciple Making Leaders

Session One

Introduction:

This session will orient you to some basic concepts behind the Relational Leadership Training also known as RET. You will also review the unique format and flow of this training.

Pre-session Assignment:

(Nothing for this session)

With Others – *During* Group Instruction

In this part of this training session you will work together with others to gain understanding of the key truths of this session. You are to complete the following activities during the group instruction time:

Step 1 (In Triads) – Pray together, asking God to graciously provide His direction, protection, and presence during the group instruction time.

Step 2 (In Triads) – Read the article “Why ‘Relational’?” (located at the end of this session) out loud together. NOTE – you may want to have different men alternate reading each paragraph instead of one person reading the whole thing. This will help to increase participation and attentiveness. As you read:

- A. Place the letter “N” in the margin near information that is “New” to you.
- B. Underline what strikes you as significant.
- C. Circle terms or ideas you might need to have clarified.

Step 3 (In Triads) – Take a few minutes to discuss the following:

- A. How long have you attended this church?
- B. What kind of ministries and activities have you been involved in?
- C. Do you know people in your church well? If so, how do you know that you know them well? If you don’t know them well, why don’t you?

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Step 4 (On Your Own) – Take about 15 minutes for each person to write out the answers to the following questions about five other men who are participating in the training. Do not talk with others during this time. Answer from what you already know.

- A. His or her full name.
- B. The names of his spouse and children.
- C. His or her favorite hobby or recreational activity.
- D. A personal strength he has.
- E. A personal weakness he has.
- F. The name of a person he has led to Christ or is trying to lead to Christ.
- G. An area of sin with which he struggles.
- H. An area where he has experienced personal deliverance or victory through God working in his life.

When you have written the answers to the above questions for five men or women in the training with you, wait for others to finish before moving on to the next step.

Step 5 (With the Whole Group) – After everyone has finished step 4 (as much as they are able) discuss the following questions:

- A. In light of how thoroughly you were able to answer the questions, how well do you actually know each other?
- B. What does this tell you about the types of conversations you have with each other?
- C. What are some barriers that hinder all of you from knowing each other better?

Step 6 (In Triads) – Read the article “Why ‘Elders’?” (located at the end of this session) out loud together. After reading the section, answer the following questions:

- A. What have been the milestones in your personal growth as a Christian?
- B. Until now, what has been your church’s means to training men towards elder-level leadership?
- C. Do you have any concerns with participating in this Relational Elders Training? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

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Post Session Follow Up:

1) Make a call to get to know someone.

A. Call one person you don't know very well who is a part of your training group for the purpose of getting to know him. Ask two questions:

i. How are you doing?

ii. How can I pray for you?

2) Obtain something to use as a "Learning Journal" throughout the Relational Elders Training. This is something you will use every session to record answers and key insights you gain. Your Learning Journal can be in any format that is useful for you, such as a notebook, paper in a 3-ring binder, or an electronic document on an iPad or tablet.

3) Discuss with your Spouse:

A. The main ideas of this session, and your follow up assignment.

B. Pray for your spouse over the phone.

4) Prayerfully think about what you have learned with regard to the truths of this session, your experience during the assignment, and your conversation with your wife. Use the questions below to guide your reflection (thinking). You do not necessarily have to write out answers to all of the questions but take the time to prayerfully think about each one and then write down some thoughts pertaining to one or two of them. Be ready to share your thoughts and insights during the next group instruction time.

A. Do you need to repent of any disobedience? If so, what?

B. Do you need to acknowledge any unbelief? If so, what?

C. What biblical truth do you need to trust to be true for you?

D. What promises of God can you trust in and expect Him to keep?

E. What signs of growth do you perceive in your life?

F. What can you give thanks to God for?

5) Record any "Aha Moments" from this session (i.e. insights gained that are important for you to remember). Record these in your Learning Journal.

Why “Relational”?

This training is called *Relational Elders Training* for a reason. The design of this training is orientated to develop healthy relationships: Your relationship with God, yourself, your family, other elders, and the people you are to shepherd and oversee.

The reality is that you exist in relationships. You interact with people all the time; some you want to, some you don't want to, and some you don't get a choice. Think about all the people you interact with on a regular basis. People in your family, people at work, neighbors, people at church, members of sports teams or clubs, servers in restaurants or stores, etc. You live continually in community. However, just because you live in community does not mean that your relationships with others are “healthy” and “meaningful”. Many people live in a “crowded loneliness” with superficial relationships or even harmful relationships.

Early in this training you will learn that for your relationships to be healthy and meaningful, they must be rooted in an understanding of the Trinity. You are created in the image of God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is an eternal community and you are created to reflect his image.

This training also recognizes the relational dynamic that is a primary aspect of your salvation in Christ, walk with Christ, and ministry for Christ.

- Your salvation in Christ is primarily relational. For example, if you asked people to define “eternal life,” most people would say something like “to live forever.” However, that is not the way Jesus defined it. In John 17 Jesus says; *“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”* (John 17:3). Eternal life has an important relational aspect of knowing Jesus and being known by Jesus (Matthew 7:21-23).
- Your walk with Christ is primarily relational. *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you”* (John 14:15-17). Notice that this relationship involves the Trinity.
- Your call to serve Christ is primarily relational. The relational reconciliation you have with God through Jesus Christ is also now a responsibility for you to share with others who do not know Christ. Paul tells the Corinthians, *“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Throughout this training there will be an orientation on restoring and building biblical relationships. For example, this training covers a framework for eldering that looks at how an individual elder grows in strength of character and, at the same time, can serve in a vulnerability of brokenness. This framework also looks at how a group of elders can perform their work from their combined strength yet, at the same time, have a position of humility among those they care for.

Why “Elders”?

This training has been developed, and is delivered, on the clear biblical teaching that men functioning in the role of “elders” are the primary leadership within the local church.

The following statements about elders are from the CB Northwest “Identity Document.”

Elder: The spiritual leadership function is borne corporately by mature men who hold various offices. These are men who manifest the biblical qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. They shepherd God’s church through feeding, leading, guiding, nurturing, and administrating the church. Their express purpose is to discern the mind of Christ and lead the church in following Christ’s will.

Vocational and Lay Elders: Vocational elders are paid by the church so that they may not be encumbered by seeking other employment; accordingly, they are able to serve the church in a vocational capacity. Lay elders are fully qualified, according to the criteria stated in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, to be recognized elders in a local church, but these carry out specific divine callings and employment outside of the church, as witnesses to Christ’s gospel in the world, while also serving as elders within a local church.

Some churches function under the misconception (and prayer) that elder-level leaders will spontaneously appear out of thin air. In other churches, the pressures of existing ministry push leadership development to a perennial place on the church’s “backburner”, hoping that maybe someday they will get around to it.

Healthy churches require healthy church leaders. Leaders who are spiritually mature and skilled in applying the truth of the gospel to the harsh realities of people’s lives. These types of leaders must be intentionally developed in knowledge, maturity, experience, and skill.

You might already be an elder in your church. You might be in this training to prepare for eldership. Or the idea that you would be an elder in your church might seem unreasonable to you (for now). It does not matter because it is your responsibility to grow in your faith, maturity, and ability to serve other people in Christ’s name (whether you are an elder or not).

- *Him {Jesus} we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28).*
- *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).*