

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

Summer 2020

Be a Leader Maker

S. Joseph Kidder

Andrews University, kiddersj@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>

Recommended Citation

Kidder, S. Joseph, "Be a Leader Maker" (2020). *Faculty Publications*. 3331.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/3331>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

BE A LEADER-MAKER



When I discuss the importance of training people to do ministry and evangelism, I present the audience with the following case study: If a church has one hundred people in attendance in a given year, and one hundred more people come to that church in that same year, what would the attendance be at the end of the year? Now, take the same church and assume that no one was added to the church during that particular year. What would the attendance be at the end of the year? In the first scenario, people tell me that by the end of the year, attendance will be 150, 200, or even 250, because some of those who come will bring their families with them, so attendance will be higher than two hundred. In the second scenario, some will say eighty or one hundred.

What is the correct answer? Based on our research in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the answers in the second scenario are correct. Attendance at the end of the year will be about seventy-five to eighty people. Why? Because every year someone dies, someone leaves the area, and others become inactive. Also, since nothing happens during the year, a negative mood and a feeling of pessimism permeate the congregation, which means that even maintaining the current membership is very difficult. In the first scenario, our research shows that when a church adds one hundred members to its current attendance of one hundred, its membership will *still* be one hundred at the end of the year—unless the church does the following things:

1. Increase the base of ministry
2. Increase the base of leadership
3. Focus on the family
4. Offer inspiring and dynamic worship
5. Increase the level of spirituality
6. Offer a note of hope

Every church grows in correlation to its effectiveness at meeting people's needs in discipleship and ministry. Common sense says that if you want to attract families with children, you need to have a ministry for kids. If you want to keep people in the church, you need a discipleship ministry. In this article, we will focus on increasing the base of ministry and leadership.

THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF TRAINING: A CASE STUDY

Suppose we have a wonderful, dynamic church member named Michelle. (I am choosing a woman here because in our research, we discovered that the number of women who do this ministry of nurture is many times higher than the number of men who do so.) Michelle loves God, His people, and her church. She ministers to four families (whether she does it intentionally or intuitively is not important here). She visits the first family when they are missing from church, she has Bible studies with the second family, she socializes outside of church with the third family, and she is discipling the fourth family to do ministry. If any of these families does not come to church, she calls on them; if one of them is in need or in trouble, she ministers to them.

Now, let us assume that her church is very active, and throughout the course of the year, it adds twenty new families. The church pastor knows that unless someone discipled these new families, they might leave the church. He does not have enough leaders and ministers, so he goes to Michelle and says, "Michelle, you are the best when it comes to discipleship. No one does it as well as you do. You know the Lord has blessed our congregation this year. He gave us twenty new families! But if we don't disciple them, we're going to lose them." Then he says to her, "Could you add three or four more families to your load?"

Michelle could answer in two ways—yes or no. Michelle might say yes, but because of her limited time and resources, four families to take care of may be her limit. If she takes on more than she can handle, she will become resentful, burdened, overworked, or angry. What Michelle should have done all along is raise other leaders to do what she is doing. And this is what every one of us should do in the church.

Every church grows in proportion to the number of ministries it has. The more ministries the church has, the more likely it is to grow. But all ministries depend on a leader inspired by God. Every minister and leader in the church should pray and seek earnestly to duplicate themselves. The base of ministry will never grow

unless the base of leadership increases. An important responsibility of leaders is to duplicate themselves and make sure that everyone else is successful in what they do.

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

You have heard the old question: “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” That question is settled when it comes to ministry and leadership: leaders always come first. Without strong, committed leaders, there would be no ministry. There are hundreds of ministries that every church might do but cannot because of a lack of leadership or resources. God must birth in the heart of a leader a burden for a particular kind of ministry or leadership. When God puts it in the heart, He also gives the passion, desire, and skill to do it, and He provides the resources along the way.

The need to build leaders is so fundamental that Jesus spent three and a half years in full-time leadership/discipleship formation. In fact, if Jesus had not built His disciples, there would not be a church today. And if we do not build a new generation of leaders, there will be no church in the future.

The New Testament church followed in the footsteps of Jesus. Not only did they baptize new believers daily through their Spirit-filled witnessing and preaching, but they were also intentional in raising a new generation of leaders. Acts 6 says that the apostles selected and called other disciples to help them do ministry and leadership in the church and in the world. Soon they also began to understand, practice, and preach the priesthood of all believers. Peter says, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). Everyone was considered to be a disciple and had a ministry to perform.

Paul was in the habit of having an apprentice. Early on he took Barnabas with him; later on he mentored John Mark. But one of the most powerful examples of mentoring was Paul’s work with Timothy. Paul invested his life to training, equipping, motivating, and inspiring the young pastor. What is so interesting is that Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to do the same with others: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2).

People often ask me, “How do you find new leaders in the church?” My answer is to pray about it and claim God’s promise. One of the most neglected leadership promises in Scripture is found in Matthew 9:35–38: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teach-

ing in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. *Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*’” (emphasis supplied).

Jesus selected leaders through prayer. He stressed that the harvest is plentiful. Lost people, needy people, hurting people, and sick people are all around us, but the workers are few. We need to pray that God will send us the right leaders to work with various groups of people and their needs. The traditional way of finding leaders is to take whomever is willing, or outspoken, or can be talked into accepting. But God wants us to pray that He will lead us to His choice—to someone who is filled with the Spirit of God, has wisdom, and has the favor of the people. God’s choice will come with God’s passion to minister. God will birth in the hearts of His leaders the ministry they are wired for and are gifted to do.

Jesus demonstrated this model to us when He selected the apostles. He spent the whole night in prayer so God the Father would lead Him to the right people: “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor” (Luke 6:12–16).

THE BEST WAY TO TRAIN PEOPLE

I am also frequently asked about the best way to train people in the church. I answer, “On the job!” The pastor and elders should create a culture of equipping, training, motivating, and encouraging accountability. Every leader should be training a new leader. Building a new generation of leaders fulfills Jesus’ mandate to equip new believers for effective ministry and evangelism. Moreover, if the church is not intentional about building a new generation of leaders, there will be no increase in attendance. There might be growth on the books, but not in the number of people who come to church. Effective leaders meet the needs of others; they are the ones who bring people to church, minister to them, and keep them in the church. ED

Joseph Kidder is professor of Christian Ministry and Discipleship at the SDA Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, MI, USA.