

ABA Seminar: Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

Whitecourt Baptist Church

Friday, December 2, 2016

6:30-6:45 Welcome and Intro

It's the year 2035 and a group of a dozen promising young ministry leaders have gathered on the campus of Fossen Seminary (formerly known as Taylor Seminary) in Edmonton. As these students settle into their seats, everyone's attention turns toward Professor Dueck. After greeting everyone, praying, and sharing a few thoughts, he invites the group to engage in a discussion of the factors that led them to discover and respond to God's call in their lives.

Aiden speaks up first. "I think I knew early in life that God was calling me. I was fortunate to grow up in a home church that supported what God was doing in my life. My kids ministry and youth ministry leaders were great...really influential to me. But, when I stop to think about it today, I can recognize that there was so much more going on there...so much that helped me find my way to where I am today. Even as a Junior High kid, I was provided opportunities to get involved...in little ways at first. However, over time, I was entrusted with more and more chances to become an active contributor. This enabled me to begin discovering my gifts and helped me realize that God could work through me. My church's simple willingness to take a chance on getting me involved played a big role in helping me to discover God's call on my life.

"I had a similar experience," states Sophia. "What was huge for me was the encouragement I received along the way...and not just from the obvious people like the pastors. There were a number of adults in the church who went out of their way to encourage me...to affirm the things they saw God doing in my life. They were paying attention. That was a huge gift to me. They recognized my gifts, encouraged me to exercise them, and found ways to let me know that they were praying for me. These were just regular people, too: a software developer, a carpenter, a school teacher, a few retired people. There's no doubt now that their influence in my life was huge."

"Very interesting thoughts," responds Professor Dueck. "Thanks for sharing, Aiden and Sophia. Anyone else?"

After a brief pause, Jackson's voice breaks the silence: "My experience was pretty different than that. I was a late-comer to the faith," he states matter-of-factly. "I didn't really start coming around church until my teen years. I was pretty unsure of myself, pretty insecure really. When I consider the major influences in my life, one name stands out: Gord. Gord was a key leader in our church. When I first started following Jesus, Gord sort-of took me under his wing. He took time to get to know me. He listened to the questions I was asking and the struggles I was having. He didn't always have the answers. However, the fact that Gord was interested in me and available to me was pretty powerful. I just didn't have many people like that in my life. Gord helped me pay attention to who God is, to learn who I am in Christ, and to discover what God wanted to do in my life. That's a big reason I'm here today."

"Excellent!", exclaims Professor Dueck.



6:45-6:55 Insights from Joshua 1:1-18 (NIV)

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. **5** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

7 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: **11** "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.'"

12 But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, **13** "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you after he said, 'The LORD your God will give you rest by giving you this land.' **14** Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them **15** until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

16 Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. **17** Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. **18** Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!"

Table Discussion:

1. How does the role that Joshua is called to take up in this passage relate to the work previously done by Moses?
2. What are some of the challenges that Joshua faces?
3. What resources does Joshua have at his disposal to help him fulfill his calling?

6:55-7:05 Reporting Back

7:05-7:20 **Insights from I Chronicles**

I Chronicles 22:2-19: David desired to build a Temple for God, but is told that this is not his role (vv. 7-8). God makes it clear to him that this will be accomplished in the next generation by his son, Solomon (vv. 9-10). Rather than washing his hands of the project, he chooses to help set the stage for success in the next generation by making preparations for Solomon's benefit (vv. 5, 14-15). He also tries to impart a compelling vision of the project to his son (vv. 11-13, 17-19).

I Chronicles 28:11-21: David passes along the plans that the Spirit of God had given him, making it clear that it will actually be Solomon's responsibility to carry it out.

I Chronicles 29:1-20: David gives resources for the accomplishment of this project and calls upon others to do the same (vv. 1-13). He sets the whole project within an intergenerational context: it is about the bigger picture of Israel's relationship with God and its participation in what God is doing (vv. 14-19).



**“Now when David had served God’s purpose
in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was
buried with his ancestors and his body
decayed.”**

~Acts 13:36

7:20-7:35 **Contemporary Challenges**

The scene is the monthly church council meeting of First Old Church, a congregation that has been a pillar in its community for more than a century. Nick, the church's youth minister, had brought a request for high school youth group members to become involved in leading the worship services alongside adult leaders on a monthly basis. For the church council, this proposal was quite “out-of-the-box.” As best anyone could remember, there hadn't been a time in recent memory when young people had been invited to participate in the church's life in this way. Nick made an impassioned case for the benefits of his proposal. His voice was energetic and hopeful. After finishing, the room became quiet for a moment. Nick felt the weight of this silence. Pangs of anxiety begin to radiate in his chest. How would the council respond?

“Thanks very much for sharing those thoughts, Nick.” These words from Larry, the council chair, broke the silence. “It will be good for us to discuss this. What do you all think?”

"I like what you're trying to do, Nick." This was the voice of Bert, a 68-year-old retired store manager who had been a key leader at First Old Church for many years. I'm just not sure how practical it is. Can we really trust youth with this sort of responsibility? I mean, they haven't really had the chance to develop the skills for this kind of public ministry. I worry that this could end up hurting the quality of what happens during our services."

"It could go really badly," exclaimed Judith, a woman who had taught the grade 4 Sunday School class for many decades. However, everyone knew that Judith was prone to imagine the worst-case scenario. The people gathered around the boardroom table would have been surprised if she hadn't made a statement like this.

"Well," said Nick, "a big part of what I'm proposing is meant to help young people develop their skills and talents, to support them as they learn to become real contributors to the life of the church. I don't think we need to worry about this ruining things," he continued, actively suppressing the defensiveness that he felt growing within him. "I think it could be really great, actually!"

"I like this idea," Sandy offered. Sandy had always made a point to be supportive of Nick and took an active interest in the youth of the church, too. "This could make a big difference in the lives of our young people. And I think it could be pretty neat for the whole church to see our youth get involved in this way, too."

Norm, a 55-year-old business owner, was not convinced. "Well, some things are just better done by adults," he declared with a sense of finality. Norm's strong personality meant that he rarely hesitated to assert his opinion. While he carried himself with confidence, he also tended to intimidate some of the other people around the table at times. Sandy visibly shrunk back in reaction to Norm's bold pronouncement.

"My big issue is the way these kids these days dress," stated Edith. "It frustrates me enough our young people come to church dressed that way. It is distracting sometimes, if I'm being honest. Do we really want to put that on the platform for all to see? That doesn't strike me as especially worshipful. And we'd be validating this, basically."

Edith's comments sparked a flurry of discussion from the other members of council. While some spoke in favour of Nick's proposal, he could feel the conversation's momentum being pulled in a direction that wasn't favourable to his proposal. His thoughts became a whirlwind. "How did we get here," he questioned within himself.

After some time passed, Larry spoke up. "Well, it seems pretty clear that we aren't in agreement about this proposal. How about we table this and have another look at this again at a future meeting?" Several council members nodded their heads in agreement. "I'd just as soon we didn't," whispered Norm loudly enough that everyone could hear.

That evening as the meeting concluded, Nick walked away feeling disappointed and a bit dejected. "I kind of wish I'd never asked," he said to himself.

7:35-7:50 Table Discussion

1. What do you think the core issues are in each of these scenarios? How have these issues impacted the effectiveness of these churches in empowering the next generation of leaders?

2. What challenges does your church face in recognizing and empowering young people with leadership potential? Beyond your own church, what major challenges do you think churches in our culture today face in empowering emerging leaders?

7:50-8:05 Break

8:05-8:35 Developing a Culture of Empowerment



- **CULTURE:** What we do; how we behave; our underlying attitudes and values
 - *Culture* and *Cultivate* come from the same root
 - “Conversation creates culture”
- Providing Essential Nutrients and Conditions:
 - Young leaders need a community that will *notice, name, and nurture* gifts
 - Young leaders need a community that will **CARE**

C--Create *hospitable space* to explore calling

A--Ask the questions that help young leaders pay attention

R--Reflect on how our stories intersect with God’s story

E--Explore, enact, and establish ministry opportunities

- **Two Key Conditions:**
 - **Intergenerational Relationship**
 - **Authentic Leadership Experiences**

Keychain leaders are aware of the keys on their keychain. They are intentional about entrusting and empowering all generations, including teenagers and emerging adults, with their own set of keys.

Keychain leadership is a spirit and commitment demonstrated by both paid and volunteer leaders that permeates every area of the church. It is about giving the right keys at the right time. No matter your role, here is what you should know: if you are willing to entrust your keys to young people, they will trust you with their hearts, their energy, and their creativity. It can sometimes seem like more work than it's worth—but if you give them your access, you have the opportunity to touch a whole generation.

~Kara Powell, Jake Mulder & Brad Griffin, *Growing Young*, 53, 55.

- **Some Practical Steps:**

- Conduct a young leader assessment
- Make sure young people are trained before giving them the keys
- Ways to begin exercising keychain leadership:
 - ✓ Envision how you and your church can invest in developing young leaders
 - ✓ Read a book together
 - ✓ Invite a young leader to preach, lead a small group study, or engage in other forms of leadership. Help them craft their sermon, lesson, etc.
 - ✓ Send a promising young leader to seminary
 - ✓ Ask young leaders in your church about an area in which they'd like training
 - ✓ Partner with several churches to host or staff a training event
 - ✓ Create an internship program



8:35-8:50 Table Discussion

1. Of the ideas presented in this session, which do you think are already happening in your church today? What impact do you see these things having?
2. Which of these ideas would be most challenging for your church to implement? Why?
3. Which of these ideas are you most eager to see your church put into practice? What would it take for that to happen?

8:50-9:00 Reporting Back

9:00-9:20 The Personal Challenge

- **Ways each of us can get our hands in the soil:**

- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Relate
- ✓ Invite
- ✓ Encourage
- ✓ Champion
- ✓ Sponsor
- ✓ Celebrate
- ✓ Model



“It has been my experience that many of your adults will be interested in serving as mentors with young people. However, I have also noticed that even though adults indicate they are interested in serving as a mentor, they will also feel as if they do not have the time to do it. It is for this very reason that I tell churches that true mentoring is not necessarily an investment of extra time, but it is in fact ‘doing what you already do,’ just doing it with younger people...The purpose of mentoring is actually very simple—it is basically the building of growing, inter-generational relationships that foster spiritual growth by just spending time together.”

~Mel Walker, *Inter-Generational Youth Ministry*, 140.

9:20-9:30 Wrap-Up and Prayer

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