

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH IN EUROPE

Jerry Coleman
Europe Area Director
Free Methodist Church

OUR VISION AND VALUE STATEMENT:

We purpose to be a healthy biblical community, a holy people, multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and congregations. Through the following principles, we position ourselves to participate in the thriving movement of God.

4. The function of leadership is to find, equip and release godly competent leaders, not just to personally perform ministry.

I grew up in America. I was formally trained in America. I was part of the American church for many years. The primary model I saw was that of the pastor, the minister personally performing the ministry. This is how it's done!

Now that I'm all grown up and can begin to think and reflect, I'm beginning to scratch my head a bit. After reading some of the New Testament, I'm not finding the model of doing all the stuff that needs to be done in the church by one person.

Don't get me wrong! Betty Kay taught Sunday School. David ushered. The Morrisises were always at the door. My Dad led the singing of the hymns. So, lots of people did something during those two and a half hours on Sunday morning between 9:30 and 12:00.

But, I'm thinking that maybe, just maybe, church is something more than those few hours a week. I'm thinking that leadership is something more than leading a one hour meeting. I'm thinking that – no, it couldn't be – that in some ways, the model that I saw growing up wasn't the model that Jesus was talking about.

John Wesley talked about the "Priesthood of all believers," but he forgot to mention this to the pastor of my youth. Wesley affirmed the biblical reporting of the first century events. He promoted the idea that even

“unschooled, ordinary men (and women)” mentioned in Acts 4.13 could be used of God on a daily basis in a powerful way.

So, I decided to try this out. Could it work today?

As I mentioned previously, quite a few youth began being drawn to Jesus at the English Camp in 1997. We had to begin thinking about follow up. So, my wife, our three children, another adult and I invited to our flat around a dozen of these youth that we though really showed leadership potential. Some of them were confessed believers, some of them weren't, others of them we just weren't sure. But all of them shared the excitement of finding something new and different at camp.

That Saturday, after piling all their shoes by our front door, and after kissing everyone on both cheeks, and after filling them up on chips, biscuits and drinks, and after singing some songs we sang at camp, and after the chaos of stories shared all across our living room about the joys of camp, we asked them if they thought others in Gyôr would like this kind of thing to happen on a regular basis. “You have experienced something significant, a personal contact with God. Would you be interested in helping tell your friends about this and leading in ways that would help them to have personal contact with God, too?”

They all were enthusiastic and ready to go! “Persze! Of course!”

So, we allowed them to brain storm about ideas on how to do this. They finally came up with the idea of having a one day camp reunion when they would invite others to join in the experience.

“That’s a great idea!” I affirmed. “Now, let’s get into four groups to plan this out. We need a publicity group, a music and drama group, a game group and an overall leadership group that would help keep us all on track.”

So, we sent around a sign up sheet, then immediately got into the groups: one stayed in the living room, one went to Sarah and Kristin’s tiny bedroom (our daughters), one sat on the floor of my bedroom and one sat around the dining table.

“OK, the first thing you need to do is to pick a leader and an assistant leader. Then start planning.”

At first they were rather shocked and surprised that we wanted them to actually initiate and lead. My wife, another adult and I just sat there to encourage them and answer questions. By the end of the evening, there was so much energy in our small flat that we didn't need light bulbs!

Two months later, I stood in the back and watched these teens lead music, pull off a drama, lead games and a few share their personal stories about how God was making a difference in their lives and He could be close to them as well.

So, we're trying something different. We're trying something biblical. I wish I could say all those leaders were still around and still hanging in there with God. I've not seen many of them for years. Some of them have become very strong Christian leaders. But most of all, I'm seeing my job to pray for God to raise up leaders, then give them opportunities to creatively lead, instead of do all the work myself.

The function of leadership is to find, equip and release godly competent leaders, not just to personally perform ministry.

- Do you feel you have to do all the ministry?
- How much of your time is spent on developing leaders?
- Who might be overlooked because he or she is too young, inexperienced and possibly just not given a chance?

In what ways do you help find, equip and release godly competent leaders?