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TRAINING UNIT 44 (47.31 MINUTES)

Discipleship group, community of faith, spiritual family .....

Leadership in the networked house churches .....

Leadership in networked house churches: apostles, deacons, elders .....

In the New Testament, Jesus brings servant leadership .....

3 Types of leaders in the New Testament .....

Qualification, calling and training of New Testament leaders .....

Entrusting leadership .....

Team leadership .....

Summary .....

For the equipping of the saints .....

➔ *Part II: Application* .....

➔ *Part III: Outreach* .....

Training Unit 44

Discipleship group, community of faith, spiritual family

Leadership in the networked house churches

Definitions

1. Discipleship group
This is a group of new believers who have been baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. They are regularly discipled as a group. In the New Testament, these discipleship groups are not yet called a church.

2. Spiritual family, community of faith or house church
When a discipleship group makes a committed decision to live out Acts 2:42-47 together, we call them a spiritual family, a community of faith or a house church. The New Testament calls such a group a "church that meets at their house".
(1. Corinthians 16:19: Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. Colossians 4:15: Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.) In our everyday lives, we would call this a (nuclear/core) family.

3. House church/networked house church
When a group of 3 to 5 house churches, communities of faith or spiritual families join together and have a leadership (elders and deacons), we call it a networked house church. In our everyday lives, one would call such related groups of core families a clan.

Review
In lesson 43, we learned about the structure of networked house churches.

1. We go as a team and form a mobile spiritual family.

2. We look for a person, a house or a group of peace. We baptize this group and form a group of committed disciples.

3. This discipleship group lives out the twelve values according to Acts 2:42-47 in a committed way. In this way, the group becomes a full-fledged house church.

4. 3 to 5 house churches (about 5x12 = 60 persons) start to connect and become a NETWORKED house church. This is a small network. A networked house church (3 to 5 spiritual families) is a full-fledged, autonomous church with a leadership team.

5. As soon as there are more than five spiritual families in the network, it is divided into two networks.

6. Every single spiritual family of a networked house church and also whole networked house churches are flexible and are free to organize events like church evenings, celebrations, Sunday school, youth ministry, etc. together.

Leadership in networked house churches: apostles, deacons, elders

Matthew 20:20-25
Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Pyramid system leadership

Leadership also exists in the world. It is a royal/top-down leadership based on the pyramid system.

- The leader on top rules.
- The leader rules over his subjects and lets himself be served.
- The leader has THE vision.
- People need to work to fulfill THE vision of the leader.

Leadership under Moses
In the Old Testament, Moses introduced a similar pyramid system based on the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law.

Exodus 18:13-24
The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, (…) "Select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

It must be noted that only some individuals received the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and that the advice for such a leadership model did not come from God but from Jethro, a pagan priest.

In the New Testament, Jesus brings servant leadership

Matthew 20:26-28
Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus redefines the core principles of leadership in the New Testament. He puts everything upside down.
- Jesus' view of leadership is not about:
    - ...standing at the top and commanding.
    - ...motivating others to fulfill the vision of the leader.
    - ...developing strategies to put into practice the leader's vision.
- Leading others means to serve them. "The greatest shall be the servant of all."
- Leading means to follow Jesus' example by giving one's life for others so that they can live.
- Leading means to serve others so that they can fulfill the calling God has for them.
- Leading means to serve by helping others to be successful.
- As a leader, I function as a ladder that helps others come into their calling.

3 Types of leaders in the New Testament

The New Testament mentions three kinds of special leaders or servants who were involved in planting and building churches.

The leadership areas of the three types of leaders

New Testament leadership is always found in groups, there is no leadership lead only by an individual. No apostle is at work alone, they are always in a team. There is no individual elder but always a group of elders. The same is true for deacons.

1. **Leadership of sent ones**
   - Greek: ‘apostello’ means ‘to send’; ‘apostolos’ means ‘the sent one’.
   - Latin: ‘missio’ means ‘to send’; missionaries are the sent ones.
   - They primarily lead at the beginning, when introducing discipleship and during the formation of the first house churches.
   - They serve the first disciples by teaching the basic values of the Kingdom of God. These values are:
     - Discipleship
     - Fellowship
     - Multiplication
   - The sent ones teach these basic values to the first disciples and to the first house churches.
   - The sent ones train the other two leadership levels, the deacons and elders.

2. **Leadership of the deacons**
   - Deacons serve a spiritual family. They are like house parents in a house church.
   - Their main task is to oversee that discipleship, fellowship and multiplication happen in the house church. They help those who are struggling to put into practice the core house church values.

3. **Leadership of the elders**
   - Elders serve and oversee a group of 3 to 5 spiritual families (which is a networked house church).
   - Their main task is to ensure that all spiritual families of a networked house church can really put into practice the basic values (discipleship, fellowship and multiplication). If a spiritual family cannot do this anymore, the elders are called to reintroduce these basic values.

The role of leadership in establishing a networked house church

1st phase

- The team of the sent ones visits an unreached ethnic group and finds a person or a house of peace that they baptize.
- Can this be men AND women?
  - YES, men and women can serve in the ministry of sending. There can be men and women in a sending team.
  - In the New Testament, HOWEVER, only men received the title of Apostle. Nevertheless, women are a full part in the ministry of sending.

2nd phase

- The newly developed discipleship groups are discipled by sent ones.
- They lay the foundation (discipleship, fellowship, multiplication), so the discipleship groups become churches that meet in houses.

3rd phase

- From among the disciples of the spiritual family, the sent ones train some (2 to 4) as leaders of the spiritual family.

- The sent ones or leaders we call deacons. The main task of the deacons is to ensure that all members of the spiritual family really live based on the basic values (discipleship, fellowship, multiplication). They ensure that the discipleship continues, that the fellowship does not decrease in quality and that the multiplication does not stop.

- The deacons help when members of the spiritual family are in difficulty.

- The sent ones train the deacons. Can men AND women be deacons? YES, men and women can be deacons.

1 Timothy 3:11
In the same way, the women [female deacons] are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

We see that Nympha had a church that met in her house.

Colossians 4:15
Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

4th phase

- As soon as several spiritual families and a networked house church is formed, the sent ones train some disciples from the spiritual families or from the group of deacons to be leaders. The leaders are responsible for the networked house church.
- We call this group of leaders of spiritual families elders. They have a greater responsibility than deacons.
- The main task of the elders is to ensure that all spiritual families of a networked house church really live out the basic values (discipleship, fellowship, multiplication).
- When a spiritual family struggles with these values, the elders help that family to get back on track.
- Can these be men AND women?
    - In the New Testament, there are no female elders. That is why we do not ordain women as elders. However, it is clear that women can also have teaching and leadership responsibilities.

- Teaching these values and making sure that the values are put into practice is the MAIN TASK of leaders in the New Testament.
- What we often see as the core task of leadership, to develop and implement a vision, to lead the flock and give the church a direction, is actually NOT the MAIN task of the leaders in the New Testament.
- Rather, the leaders primarily serve the disciples and help them so that each of them lives out the basic values and come into his or her calling.

Qualification, calling and training of New Testament leaders

1. The highest and most comprehensive spiritual training is when someone was well discipled and now lives as a mature disciple. To achieve this, there is no need to acquire a special theological degree or another leadership training. Discipleship is the most comprehensive spiritual training that needs to have been experienced.
   → A disciple carries out the <u>deeds</u> of Jesus and is being transformed into his <u>character</u> and likeness.

2. A serving heart is especially required from a leader. This is another core requirement. Those who only want to rule and not serve cannot be leaders.

   Matthew 20:26+28
   Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

3. Besides the two basic requirements mentioned, the following qualifications are also required: There are 4 qualifications for deacons and 5 qualifications for elders and sent ones.
   a. Maturity in marriage
   b. Maturity in family
   c. Maturity in character
   d. Maturity in life
   e. (For elders and sent ones) Teaching ability

1 Timothy 3:1-11
Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

Entrusting leadership

How is leadership entrusted?

1. Jesus has received all power and authority (including leadership) from the Father. Matthew 28:18: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
2. Jesus gives the <u>sent ones</u> all necessary power and authority (including leadership) to plant discipleship in an unreached ethnic group.
3. As soon as the sent ones disciple a discipleship group, they start to entrust the necessary power and authority to the <u>disciples</u> so that they can wholly live and serve as disciples.
4. As soon as the sent ones disciple a group of <u>deacons</u>, they start to entrust the necessary power and authority to the deacons so that they can wholly live and serve as deacons.
5. As soon as the sent ones disciple a group of <u>elders</u>, they start to entrust the necessary power and authority to the elders so that they can wholly live and serve as elders.

When the sent ones come to a region or an ethnic group, they carry all power, authority and leadership. In the moment that they ordain elders by laying hands on them, they have entrusted all power, authority and leadership to the elders. Real sent ones do not continue to claim more leadership and authority for themselves, but rather pass on as much as possible and entrust leadership into the hands of the local disciples as quickly as possible. The sent ones ordain the deacons and elders of the first generation.
Later, when the sent ones have moved on to a new place or a new ethnic group to start a new work, the elders and deacons, who were ordained by the sent ones, train new elders and deacons themselves.

Team leadership

The New Testament does not mention leadership of a single person (except Jesus, who is part of a leadership team with the Father and the Holy Spirit himself). It is always a team leadership. That is why we should never only ordain an individual deacon or an individual elder or commission an individual sent one.

Summary

- When we find a person or a house of peace, we baptize them and begin a discipleship group to disciple them to become mature disciples.
- Then the discipleship group develops into a mature and committed spiritual family, a church that meets in the house that lives out the 12 values together.
- That first house church grows into 3 to 5 house churches, which then form a networked house church.
- These groups or this small network of house churches are closely connected to each other through:
  - relationships, since all groups know them same people or have been started and formed by the same people. They are related to each other, they have the same DNA and are of the same spiritual “bloodline”.
  - the same values
  - The same traditions: same church culture, same songs, same style of serving the Lord’s Supper or living as a house church, etc.

- We train deacons as leaders for the house churches and elders as leaders for the networked house churches.
- In theory, everything is in place to multiply networked house churches and to develop a self-multiplying discipleship movement. A so-called DMM (Discipleship

For the equipping of the saints

Our body only functions if it gets a new portion of oxygen every few seconds. God created breathing, which gives impulses of fresh air. Thanks to these impulses, everything continues to function properly. The body cannot function, regenerate or reproduce without these impulses and eventually it dies.
Spiritually it is the same. Impulses (in this case training) are needed again and again for a movement to multiply and grow in a healthy way. Such impulses are needed in 5 areas:

- Impulses from sent ones so that we don’t forget the sending.
- Prophetic impulses so that we continue to seek the presence and the word of God
- Evangelistic impulses so that we continue to go and proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God.
- Pastoral impulses so that we continue to look after each other, encourage, admonish and comfort each other and carry the weak ones.

- Teaching impulses so that we continue to go into the Scriptures and study the word of God, just like the people in Berea. They examined the Scriptures to see what was a word of God and what was not (Acts 17:11).

Ephesians 4:11-13
So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

This passage talks about the so-called fivefold ministry. This ministry is not for the leadership level. The ones who received the gifts are not necessarily leaders in the church but trainers and equippers of the saints. They help to train the disciples. They give spiritual impulses that freshen the body and keep it alive.
In the growing networked house churches, we look for people that are especially gifted in these areas. We identify and train them. Then we let them serve the spiritual families. First in one house church and then rotating between the house churches. Afterwards, we let them serve in the networked house church. We call this the rotating fivefold ministry. These gifted people then train other people that have been especially gifted in this area.

Part II: Application

a) Someone from the group summarizes this teaching in his own words. If anything is missing, the others can add to the summary.

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b) Group discussion

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c) Write down personal insights from the teaching

d) Share with the group who exactly you want to train in this lesson

e) Each group presents what they learned and the specific goals they want to pursue now: (outreach/group meeting).

Part III: Outreach

Prayer (4 hours/week), going (4 hours/week), discipleship (4 hours/week), community of faith (3 hours/week).

1. PRAYING:

   A) Prayer walk with a partner or the team for 2 hours every week ❑

   B) Pray 1 hour for your disciples before every discipleship meeting ❑

   C) Pray 1 hour before every community meeting ❑

2. GO: to the unreached you have a heart for ❑
3. Look for persons of peace ❑
4. PREACH: the gospel of the Kingdom of God ❑
5. EXPLAINING: the way of salvation ❑
6. Evangelistic Bible studies with interested people ❑
7. Share your personal testimony with five other people ❑
8. Call to repentance and to follow Jesus ❑
9. FAITH, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM AND RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT ❑
10. Pray for sick people during an outreach ❑
11. Raise a dead person if you are led to do so ❑
12. Seek to hear God's voice and the guidance of the Holy Spirit ❑
13. Pray for the 200 million persecuted Christians in the world, pray for your "persecutors" and bless those who are cursing you ❑
14. Continue to teach all 16 lessons to the discipleship group and coach them in it ❑
15. Find potential leaders from every spiritual family (deacons and elders) and begin a leadership training with them. ❑

BEsent is a training - without practice it is almost useless!