

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 5, Year 3

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 5, Year 3

Date Completed

___/___/___

Doctrine of the Church

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments:

___/___/___

Leading an Evangelistic Small Group:

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

___/___/___

Patience:

[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I. Doctrine of The Church

1. There are epochs of the church's history when one doctrine or another seem to be at the center of the church's struggle. You can find in the ancient church councils great conflicts over the Trinity and over the nature of Christ. During the Reformation the church fought over sacraments and the doctrine of Salvation. The great struggle today is likely over the doctrine of the church.
2. Read both Donald McKim's Introducing the Reformed Faith chapter on the Church and Louis Berkhof's Manual on the subject.
3. What is the church?
 - a. Create a list from both the Old and New Testament of Biblical images of the Church? In many ways the church itself is a mysterious thing and sometimes the best way to articulate vital aspects of it is a stew of images for which the Bible furnishes many. What can you learn from this list?
 - b. What does the word "ekklesia" mean? What does this word highlight in terms of the nature of the church?
 - c. What is the major difference between the Roman Catholic conception of what the church is verses the Reformed conception of it? How does the teaching of "the priesthood of all believers" figure into this?
 - d. Is the Christian Reformed Church a democracy? Why or why not?
 - e. Why does the church have officers in the church? (You might reference the CRC ordination forms to research this.) What are they called to be and to do?
 - f. The official name of the CRC is the Christian Reformed Church of North America. Why isn't the name "The Christian Reformed ChurchES of North America"? What is the difference? The United Reformed Churches call themselves and affiliation, not a denomination. What are they wanting to say?
 - g. The church is both institution and organism. Which should serve which? Why are both important? Why must attention be given to both?
4. Optional Question: For Extra Fun: Is a small group Bible study a church? Why or why not? Or when might a small group be a church?

II. Create an Evangelistic Bible Study

1. Small Groups have become a vital element of Christian ministry today. For many of us the small group is the place to know and be known, to love and be loved. Many others have noticed that there is often no better place to do evangelism than within the context of a small group. Whether or not you are planning on being a church planter, if you want to be involved in the work of evangelism you will need to know how to lead a small group where part of its mission is to evangelize some of its participants.
2. A purely evangelistic small group is a rather rare thing. In most cases your small group will have Christians of varying degrees of maturity. From a teaching point of view this may seem backwards, but the truth is that groups with varying levels of maturity actually benefit both the one who isn't fully committed to Christ as well as the mature believer. It is still, however, a challenge for the leader to find or develop appropriate materials that benefit both ends of the spectrum and help sharing and support to flow in both directions.
3. Task:
 - a. Examine your current small group involvement. Do you have a group you are currently involved in that is helping you in your own efforts at personal evangelism? Do you have a group where you can and do invite people who don't go to church or people who are new to church? If not, consider either shifting a group you already have or starting a new group. I believe it is healthy and important for every church leader to have a group where he or she can invite new people and use the group as a way to bring them up, while also teaching some of the ones who have been in church longer HOW to bring new people up.
 - b. Choose one of the two following assignments depending on your situation
 - i. If you currently do lead or significantly participate in a group where you can and do bring new people to the church (and the faith) to, analyze and reflect on your experience in that group:
 - (1) What brought the unchurched person into the group? What is keeping them there?
 - (2) What kinds of materials or discussions have you seen to be helpful in their involvement in the group? What things have helped them mature through the ministry of the group?
 - (3) What ways could the group have done better in ministering to these recently churched people?
 - ii. If you currently do NOT lead a group where you can and do bring unchurched people to, write a plan to start one and start implementing it:
 - (1) How do you plan to start the group? How will you invite yet limit the involvement of mature believers in the group? How will you invite the unchurched into the group?
 - (2) What materials will you use or develop? What type of group will it be? Fellowship? Study? Service?
 - (3) Once you have your plan, discuss it with our mentor and start implementing it.

III. Patience.

1. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. Patience, especially in our time, even in the church, is under valued and under utilized. The patience of God often gives us fits.
2. Read the Parable of the Wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30) and reflect on God's patience in his kingdom. Take your time with it.
3. Make a list of all of the kingdom things you are impatient for. All of the ministry efforts you find futile, all of the people you find resistant or fruitless, all of the ministry failures in your life. Include on that list all of the weedy spots in your ministry and your own life where you, like the servants, want to rush in start weeding at whatever cost to the wheat.
4. Take some time to pray about your list.
5. Talk to your mentor about your list and see what he/she has to say.
6. Pray about your list again. This time, don't just ask God to hurry up and act, but ask God to help you with patience and praise God for his patience with you and his patience with the world.