

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 7, 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 keep your binder so that at the end of your project you will have a good record of your program and a way to reference your work in the future..

Month 7, Year 3

Date Completed

____/____/____ Church History: Reformation to Present
[Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments:

____/____/____ Prepare a Church Education Class:
Mentor Comments [Estimated time: _____]

____/____/____ Honesty and Integrity:
Mentor Comments [Estimated time: _____]

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I. Church History: Reformation to the Present

There is obviously no end to studying church history. What then should be your goal in this study?

1. You should have some basic understanding of why the Western church has developed the shape it is in today. Understanding why things are the way they are is helpful in leading church into the future because patterns emerge and re-occur.
2. You should be able to recognize some key figures and have some understanding of why they are significant. Part of this is just for credibility purposes. You will likely be seen as an authority in matters pertaining to the church and you will need to know a few things about it.
3. You should have enough of a background to be able to find more information about something that arises. You will need to be able to connect present circumstances and issues with what has happened in the past so that you can credibly research something to shed light on what is happening today.

The content assignment for this month is to read Bruce Shelley's Church History in Plain Language. This time start with the section on the Reformation and read it to the end of the book. It is a lot of reading but it should be intelligible. The goal is not to memorize the material, but to be exposed to it to the degree that something someday may ring a bell and you can do further research when you need to. We expect that you will have an overview, not that you will be an expert.

II. Lead a Church Education Class

1. Pick an important person from church history from the time of the Reformation to today.
2. Do a bit more study on that person to the degree that you are familiar with them.
3. Write and teach (if possible) a church education class on this person. It can be for children or adults.
4. Make sure the class covers the following:
 - a. Why is this person important in the history of the church. What impact did this person make that we still feel the effects of today.
 - b. What was the historical context of this persons actions. What were the major challenges and difficulties he/she confronted.
 - c. How and why is this person's story and accomplishments helpful to the church today or your present church circumstance.

III. Honesty and Integrity

The story of Martin Luther among many things is a story about honesty and integrity. You have a monk who is tormented by the presentation of the gospel dominant in his day. In his despair he turns to Scripture only to find a fresh perspective, one that gives him life. Here, however, lies his dilemma. If he follows this new path he has discovered, the one taught in Romans and elsewhere in Scripture, that salvation is from grace, that the authority of the church is derived from Scripture, not from the tradition, and that the church itself is the body of priestly believers, not an exclusive line of cordoned off priests, then he will soon be in direct conflict with the church itself. Depending on who you read, this initially comes as a bit of a surprise to the naive Luther, the brilliant monk who was trying to unfetter his soul, but as the papal bull arrives, things will get hot and dangerous. What should Luther do? The consequences were enormous.

Often when we contemplate the role of honesty and integrity in ministry we quickly jump to issues of moral purity. These are important issues; issues that require constant vigilance. However, when it comes to church leadership issues of honesty and integrity just as often impact the pastor's heart, politics in the church, and the call of discipleship. There will be innumerable times in ministry when it is tempting to finesse, adjust, moderate, equivocate for the sake of an individual, a faction, or out of fear of such a group. The church leader is often caught in the triangle of trying to be faithful to God revealed in his Word and trying to make things work on the ground in this broken world. Ministries can come to a sudden halt due to moral failure, but they can be undermined and made unfruitful by years of quiet, small, subtle undermining. Which does the most damage? It is hard to say. In the parable of the sower the thorns grow with the seed and make it "unfruitful".

Part of what honesty and integrity require is courage. The courage to admit your own shortcomings in appropriate times and spaces. The courage to say or do what you believe is right even when others think you're nuts. The courage to be honest about what you are seeing when many want to avoid the subject. Honesty and integrity are crucial to godly, Biblical ministry.

Talk with your mentor about this area. About risks, about times when you succeeded in this area and times when you failed. What happened? What were the rewards and/or the consequences. How can you bolster your integrity and stay honest?