

What To Think and How To Think

SETTING UP COURSES FOR YOUR EMERGING CHURCH LEADERS

There is a great danger facing you as you realign yourself to train your emerging church leaders! Most churches that provide church-based leadership development provide only the academic component. It seems to be the way we are wired in Western culture – “training leaders = teaching classes.”

We have been encouraging our Companion churches to adopt a relational discipleship methodology when it comes to equipping new leaders. *Teaching is neither the sum nor the heart of discipleship, but it is a valuable part.* Teaching is only a third of what is necessary to properly equip saints to do ministry. CMI students have regular one-on-one time with a mentor and are consistently involved in planned ministry in the life of their church.

This month, we're sending a syllabus for an academic course. In February, we'll send you a *discipleship plan*, and in April, we'll send you an *internship plan*. All three should be part of your training process. Offering courses is the easiest thing to do.

WHAT COURSE SHOULD WE OFFER FIRST?

In October, we sent you a CMI Prospectus that laid out the courses that we felt we could offer over a 5-7 year period. Those courses are not set in stone. So, which course should you start with? One of the beauties of church-based non-formal education is that you tailor your program and courses to your meet your students' needs, rather than most academic institutions that offer a set program into which all students must fit. Sit down with your emerging leaders and find out what they know and what they need to learn.

The CMI students (5 couples) with whom we are working are involved in a brand new church plant. They had a pressing need to understand what a biblical church is and how to form one. Thus, we offered “Practical Ecclesiology” as our first course. In January the students will work together to actually create the church's formative documents. They are not just learning so that they can know more; they are learning to *do more* and *learning by doing*.

HOW CAN WE STRUCTURE OUR COURSES?

Feel free to develop your course parameters and schedules as best suits the life of your church and students. We have found the following to work fairly well.

- **Course Reading**
We recommend that each course be based on about 200-250 pages of reading. Reading can be done from a single text or from selections in several texts.
- **Course Hours**
Courses should normally involve twenty to twenty-five hours of in-class discussions. For instance, for a 20-hour course, you could have 1-hour classes for 20 weeks (semester), 2-hour classes for 10 weeks (quarter), or knock the whole thing out in a block course during one week (see modules below).
- **Course Schedule**
Some churches like to offer Old Testament and New Testament courses on Sundays (Sunday school, afternoons or Sunday evenings) to keep Sunday's focus on God's Word. Systematic and Practical Theology, Church History and Missions courses can be offered on weeknights. The weeknight courses might involve heavier reading in texts and the Scriptures, Scripture memory, papers, etc., and could be tailored to be of greater importance to those who are being equipped for teaching, shepherding and church planting ministries.
- **Modules**
Modules are intensive courses that can be offered several times during the year on special occasions. They can be taught by visiting instructors from a college, church, mission or a Christian organization. Classes can typically meet for four to six evenings during a week. Students are required to do preparatory study before the visiting lecturer arrives and follow-up assignments afterward.

A LOOK AT A SYLLABUS

Attached is a CMI course syllabus for Practical Ecclesiology. Of course, it is not necessary to give students something like this, but it helps to do so for several reasons.

1. **OVERVIEW.** A syllabus gives the student an overview of the entire course right from the beginning. He or she can see all of the assignments, class dates, project due dates, etc.
2. **SIFTING.** A syllabus lets a prospective student know how demanding a course will be, and may help to “sort out the men from the boys” for churches having a problem with too many people wanting to be involved in leadership development.
3. **PROFESSIONALISM.** A syllabus also gives a course that “professional edge” that is helpful for churches to have since they are not going to a “real” Bible college or seminary.
4. **A CLEAR RECORD.** A Syllabus also provides a comprehensive record of what you did in a course. As you look back in five years, you can see the books you used, the issues with which you dealt, etc. If you vary from the syllabus, just keep a record and modify the syllabus at the end of the course.

Notice that the Syllabus has five sections:

1. **SECTION 1.** The Introduction explains where the course falls in the scope of the total CMI program, rehearses the purposes and objectives of studying systematic theology, and gives the purpose of the course in a hopefully clear and succinct way.
2. **SECTION 2.** The Study Material section lists the texts for the course and any additional reading the student might want to do. In Practical Ecclesiology, the students read both of the smaller books and about 50 pages in Ryrie's Basic Theology – a total of over 350 pages.
3. **SECTION 3.** The Evaluation section gives the method used to determine a student's final grade. Notice the high percentage for class participation. In CMI, we read heavily out of class to prepare for highly interactive discussions in class. The teacher is not a lecturer but a facilitator of the learning process. The students also had a course project.
4. **SECTION 4.** The Course Unit Planner is an overview of dates and times during which the class will meet.
5. **SECTION 5.** Students reference the Class Preparation section each week to see what they have to read, what verses they must memorize and what issues they must be ready to address when they come to class.

Obviously, there is nothing special about the format. We try to print it in color for it to look nice, and we charge \$20.00 per student or \$25.00 per couple for each course to cover copying and printing costs. They must purchase their own books.

May God bless you richly as you develop your precious people whose influence will long outlast your lifetime!