



TRAINING FOLLOWERS OR LEADERS? GROUPWORDS

I want you to do a little exercise with me. Below are two translations of Ephesians 4:11-13. Read through them both and notice how they present the material in slightly different ways.

KING JAMES VERSION

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining, the full measure of perfection found in Christ.

What did you notice? Here's what I see and why I think it has an important bearing on a Small Group ministry.

1. In verse 11 both translations list leadership roles or positions — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
2. In verse 12 they state the purpose of these leadership roles and here is where the two translations differ. Intentional or not the KJV sounds as if the leader is the one with the responsibility “**For** the perfecting of the saints, **for** the work of the ministry, **for** the edifying of the body of Christ.” And sadly, this is the way church has functioned in the past. The minister, elder, deacon, or other “leader” has done the work of the church. Beyond them, there were very few, if any other leaders. But notice how the NIV corrects this viewpoint. It says that the purpose of the leader is “**to prepare** God's people for works of service.” The word translated “to prepare” occurs only here in the New Testament and means to equip, to train, to teach, to help others find their gifts and talents.
3. What does this have to do with a Small Group ministry? It means that part of the job of the Small Group leader is to find and equip other leaders, other servants. The alternative is to do everything yourself, make the group dependent on you, find yourself with no leader in training and eventually burn out. How much better to have a plan to routinely identify, train, equip and empower new leaders.

Leading followers, or leading future leaders ... which style provides for the ministry's future?