

How Orality Helps Develop Leaders

Last month I had the wonderful opportunity to train 27 believers as prayer-walkers. Now, I'm sure that most of the group were highly literate. However, they were to be trainers when they went back home.

It was important to size up the people present and the long-range purpose of the event. Several of the women took notes. However, the majority did not and not one of the men took notes. Few had brought a Bible. Now, since each participant was committed to going back to their churches and training others, I had to be as reproducible as possible.

Using oral methods was the key to the night's success. I didn't announce what I was doing, I just did it.

Here are some ideas that worked and might help you in leadership development:

1. Participants were immediately engaged by encouraging them to share experiences they have had with prayer-walking and leading others to pray. This allowed me to understand their level of expertise, anything needing to be corrected, and create a talkative group. They relaxed as they realized they were in a safe place to dialogue.

2. Rather than read random passages or skip around the Bible with multiple verses on spiritual warfare, I created a biblical basis for prayer-walking by telling them a Bible story. I chose to tell a composite Bible story beginning with the miracles at Ephesus in Acts 19:11-20 and then moved into the Spiritual Armor in Ephesians 6:12-20. I led them in a discussion of the truths for spiritual warfare addressed in the Bible story, focusing on prayer. Their exposition led the Bible study. I just guided them by asking questions.

3. Using video clips is a great way to engage learners. So, I showed a three minute video from OneCry. It is a visual parable on the need for prayer: <https://vimeo.com/36975274>. We discussed its meaning and then I gave them the link. Sure the video had titles on-screen, but the visuals were very strong. Check it out! It provided a needed mental break and is inspirational.

4. Case studies: My wife and I have been on several prayer-walks. We told two different scenarios as a story. You and I would call them case studies. My wife told in detail how a church prayer-walked (and prayer-drove) their county, community, and church. I then told about prayer-walking on a mission trip among Muslims in Central Asia. We never actually lectured. We just told those stories and then asked questions. What meant the most to them? What did they want to do when they got back home?

5. During the training, we also broke into groups to practice prayer-walking and also be a blessing to the host church. I asked them to form prayer teams of four or five people. We first prayed for each other and debriefed what we did and why we did it. I sent out the groups to pray through different parts of the host church; even into the parking lot. At each turn, we debriefed. Were they getting it? Could they pass it along?

Probably the least-effective thing I did during the two-hour session was give them a handout. It described a prayer-walk that could be used to start a small group that could become a church. However, they listened as I described the seven different scenarios on the two pages of text. It provided a reference guide if any of them wanted to do it.

By taking an oral approach, each participant was given something easily memorable and instructional to those they would train back in their home church—and beyond. Praise God! May a prayer movement begin from some things learned using highly reproducible oral methods.