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“Hold Your Horses!”

Some expressions greatly predate those who use them. The title of this article is one of them. In the time before motorized transportation, this expression meant to hold back the team of horses eager and ready to get going. Generally, we use this to mean, “Don’t be in such a hurry!” There must be a Russian equivalent of this expression, and it would have been very appropriate for the participants at the Facilitator Training Tom conducted during the second week of December in Krasnodar, Russia.

Because 45 Christian women leaders were expected to attend this event, it was necessary to modify how we normally conduct the training. The goal of Entrust Facilitator Training is to equip those who guide adult learning through discussion in a small group setting (up to 12 persons). Therefore, Tom planned to use the “group-on-group” approach, where the participants are divided into smaller groups of 9 - 12. These groups then rotate as the “focus group” from session to session during the training. Also, because there were no Russian women with prior training who could assist with the practice groups (sub-groups of four women each), it was arranged for some of the participants to come early for a two-day orientation.

Surprisingly, 15 women attended the orientation! Tom had hoped for at least 10. As he led this time through a



translator, Tom saw that there was sincere interest. They were learning the *why*, *what* and *how* of small-group facilitating and were experiencing it first-hand. The orientation exceeded expectations in the development of this fledgling leadership team who would later help with the small-group practicums during the seminar!

Tom wanted the three-day training seminar to be done in Russian. For that reason, he arranged to “coach” a bilingual Russian pastor that had received Entrust training in 2008. This pastor has since been a practitioner of facilitated interactive small-group learning.

A total of 30 women attended the training, including the 15 who had attended the orientation. Although fewer than anticipated, there were women from across southern Russia,



representing several different denominations. They were divided into three groups of 10 women each (with either a green, red or blue name tag).

It was an intensive three-day schedule. The training included periodic opportunities for the women to share their observations about the process of facilitating and this new experience with interactive learning. Overall, there was a growing sense of excitement as the participants began to see the potential benefits of this process in their ministries. By the end of the training, it was like trying to hold back a team of energetic horses eager to get going! By God’s grace, their experiences in this training will bear fruit through the multiple of ministries represented!

“Facilitating” was the Catalyst!

During a break as he led the Facilitator Training, Pastor Leo [not his real name] shared how he had the opportunity to lead an interdenominational prayer event for area pastors. (It was part of a larger cooperative city-wide outreach effort.) There were pastors from the Baptist, Pentecostal and Christian and Missionary Alliance churches present, and perhaps others.

Leo asked for their permission to instead lead them in a Bible study. He explained that all he would do would be to ask questions, and they would only study Scripture. They agreed to this. So Leo led them in a study on the subject of “baptism!” This is a controversial subject, as can be imagined. Generally, every church in Russia (regardless of affiliation) requires an undefined “testing period” for all new believers. They have to prove that they are worthy to be baptized! It contributes to a general problem of legalism among Russian churches.

The study lasted for almost three hours! They considered all the relevant passages on the subject. The last question Leo asked was, “Brothers, how does the practice in our churches align with what we have just studied from Scripture?” Leo says there was a long awkward silence. Finally, a young Pentecostal pastor stood and said, “Brother, you have tricked us and taught Baptist doctrine!”

Wisely, Leo turned to the others and said, “Brothers, how should we respond to this?” The Baptists quickly responded, “This isn’t what we teach, either!”

The story does not end there. The young Pentecostal pastor returned to his church and reported on the event. It is the largest church in this area of southern Russia, with over 3,000 people and 79 home churches around the region. The pastoral staff and elders studied the subject together. They concluded that they needed to change their practice!! They took steps toward “believer’s baptism on request,” without a required trial period. Over 500 people were baptized in one day! They also determined that it did not require ordination (a tedious process in Russia) for a believer to baptize someone else. We verified this story with the wife of one of the pastors from this church as well as the lead couple at one of the church’s drug and alcohol rehab centers.

If Leo had tried to teach or preach on the subject of baptism, he would have been ignored. ***By facilitating a Bible study on the subject with open, discussion-centered questions, God’s Spirit was free to work in changing their minds and hearts.*** As a result, this Pentecostal church is now more “Baptist” than the Baptists in this ordinance! Perhaps other leaders will also study this subject in their churches and reconsider their practices.

PLEASE PRAY that those who have been trained in facilitating will function as positive “catalysts” in teaching others in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ!

“The Truth Will Make You Free”

We worked with two Christian drug and alcohol rehab centers for about five years before leaving Russia. Tom was involved with training the leaders and leading a weekly Bible study with the men at one of the centers. He demonstrated what it meant to “facilitate” the study as often as he could. Last March, the director of this center, Sasha, was involved in the first two days of a five-day facilitator training seminar. One of his co-workers was able to attend the entire training.

In conjunction with this rehab ministry, we were also privileged to be involved with the translation of the Scripture-based “*Alcoholic’s for Christ*” 12-step materials into Russian. While the Pentecostal rehab center uses this material extensively, the Baptist-affiliated center where Tom had worked the most did not see any particular need for this material.

On this last trip to Russia in December, we saw how God caused the intersection of the *Alcoholic’s for Christ* materials with facilitating! We visited this center again. In the evening, we were invited to attend a home-church meeting. Ten men from the rehab center came to the meeting along with about six men and women from the house church, creating a very interesting chemistry.

Sasha led the group in a discussion of a portion of the material from one of the 12-step lessons. The discussion lasted almost three hours, and he asked only six main



Active discussion brought new insights!

questions! He facilitated the time very well, and although at times intense, the discussion never got out of hand. ***Giving these men the opportunity to interact on Scripture and to also share their opinions and insights brought their thinking to life. It was obvious that some of the men were sincerely wrestling with the relevance of Truth related to their lives.*** Sasha would summarize relevant points and be sure that the truth of Scripture was clearly understood, since “opinions” are not authoritative!

Later in the evening Tom affirmed Sasha for demonstrating the relevance of facilitating as a way to help the men think, interact and to grow spiritually. Sasha truly demonstrated the role of a “catalyst” that gave the men a voice!

What a tremendous way to see the theme verse of *Alcoholic’s for Christ* applied: “...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).

Passing the Baton

On two occasions in the past year (June and August), Entrust was invited to provide the three-day intensive Facilitator Training to select training staff at the New Tribes Mission Training Center (MTC) in Missouri. Tom and an Entrust colleague co-facilitated these events.

Tom was invited back the first week of January to “coach” two of the MTC staff, who had already received the training, as they lead another Facilitator Training event.

He met with these co-facilitators for four hours the day before the training to talk through their lesson plans. Then they arranged to also meet briefly at the conclusion of each day to touch base on how things were going and the plans for the next day. The goal of this time was to observe the readiness of pre-trained MTC staff to take responsibility for training others of their staff using the Entrust Facilitator Training materials. It was time to “pass the baton”!

The training progressed well, with the co-facilitators rotating responsibility from session to session. For the demonstration of facilitating, they also co-facilitated the first lesson from an Entrust course, having pre-planned which sections they would each cover, alternating two times during the lesson. This worked smoothly, even though they had not coordinated their questions in advance.

Overall, there was a positive response by the participants. Both of the co-facilitators emphasized the

practical application of facilitated small-group learning at several levels: in the MTC student small discipleship groups (a formal part of their training program), with some of the formal MTC courses, with informal home study-groups, and within their church contexts (since the MTC staff and students serve among many of the churches in that area).

There is growing enthusiasm for using a facilitated, interactive learning model on the MTC campus. From this point on, they will be able to train their own staff in-house!

The Challenge of Training Trainers

Last summer one of the staff from an international pastoral training mission attended an Entrust Facilitator Training in Colorado Springs. As a result, he was eager for others in his mission to also receive this training. Serving as the liaison for all the logistics, he arranged for the training through the appropriate persons. In this process, it was determined that the best opportunity for including the widest representation of their staff would be at one of their semi-annual international staff training events at their home office in Illinois.

Due to a variety of schedule complications, it was agreed that Entrust would provide a “condensed” two-day version of Facilitator Training. Also, because we anticipated 18 participants, we agreed to use the group-on-group approach [as we had done in Russia], so the group was divided into two smaller “focus groups.”

In order to accommodate this condensed schedule, we decided to mix-up the normal order of training and “tweek” the content to better fit their situation. This was the first time to try this, so the potential outcome was uncertain.

The discussion went well, with everyone participating. It was obvious that there was a “philosophical barrier” of sorts, because their trainers are more familiar with the “teaching” or “telling” model. As a mission, their primary



Trainers discussing an important point

focus is on training pastors for expository preaching, and they had a difficult time understanding the relevance of facilitated, interactive learning. However, they did affirm the value of practicing how to ask good open questions.

Due to severe winter weather the second day, the training needed to be condensed even more so we would not get stranded! Thankfully, as we shifted gears to move the afternoon training into the morning, we were able to condense several things and still touch on the critical points.

Through correspondence the following week, Tom learned that the real breakthrough among these ministry trainers came the day following the training! They were

able to have an effective debriefing time, and the relevance of facilitating finally became clearer. Since they will soon be evaluating the structure of their materials and training process, they hope to incorporate a more effective interactive learning model.

News Tidbits

❖ The past year was one of extensive travel for the both of us. Tom was out of Colorado 163 days (of which 150 days were business-related). Due to her sister’s illness, time with the grandchildren and several trips with Tom, Carol was out of Colorado a couple of weeks longer. With no immediate travel plans, it feels good to finally be at home together for awhile! This also means we will have more time to share with our neighbors and strengthen our friendships at the Russian church we attend.

❖ What a blessing to see the bath house at the Akhtirskaya Rehab Center almost completely rebuilt after it was destroyed by an electrical fire this past fall. The entire center has now been rewired with completely new materials. They are also completing the additional bunk-room on the main house that will allow them to expand their capacity from 8 men to about 15.

Thanks to God, Life Goes On

During our three weeks in Russia, while Tom was involved with training, Carol was able to reconnect with friends in Krasnodar and some of the surrounding villages.

Carol visited one Christian family whose one-and-a-



Carol with Dima and Lena

half year old son, Dima, had a kidney removed due to cancer. Because the husband is Georgian, employment is difficult and they are barely able to make ends meet financially. It has been a real struggle for them. They live in a one-room house with no indoor toilet. The doctors have prescribed a special low-protein

diet for Dima that is very expensive.

Wanting to help in some way, Carol brought them bags of groceries. She also gave Lena, Dima’s Mom, the money she had with her—the equivalent of about \$30. Through tears, Lena was overwhelmed and praised God for Carol’s visit and these simple expressions of His love.

In our final week, we were able to go together to visit the two rehab centers and the English Club. Each time we return to Russia, we are affirmed that investing six years of our lives there was not in vain. Opportunities for sharing the love of Jesus always exceed the time available!

PLEASE PRAY that we will have an opportunity (and the resources) to visit Russia again sometime this year. Our visas are good until late November.

Prayer & Praise

Praise God!! In January 2012, we began our eleventh year serving with Entrust. It is hard to believe how much has transpired over these years and what God has accomplished. It is all because of His grace!! He has provided for our needs through the prayers, financial gifts and encouragement of YOU, our Ministry Partner Team!! How grateful we are that you continue to faithfully join with us!

Please pray: (REMEMBER the 2 prayer requests above.)

- ❖ that we will find ways to build our relationships with neighbors as well as friends at the Russian church;
- ❖ that we will be an example of the Lord's grace to those we seek to serve;
- ❖ for Tom as he continues to work on and refine the oral discipling lessons for India;
- ❖ for our health and physical stamina as we seek to serve well (as our bodies remind us of our limitations);
- ❖ and that we will be spiritually alert for the opportunities and challenges God brings our way.

"O God, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come. For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?"
Psalm 71:17-19 (NASB)

20th Anniv. of the CMA church we attended



The English Club now meets at the church!

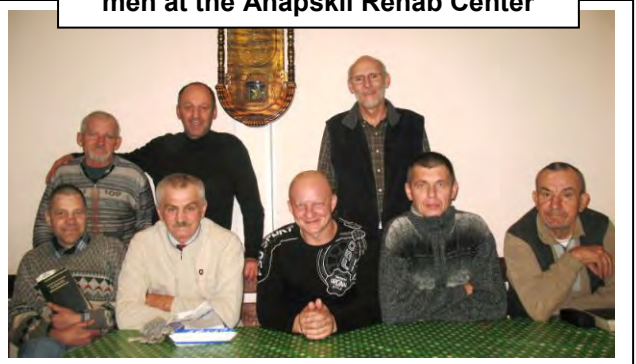


Reunion with some of our African homegroup students

Breakfast with Tanya & Sasha in their home



Study of the Word with some of the men at the Anapskii Rehab Center



Evening "pelmeini" meal with extended family of our translator, Vacilli



PICTURES from RUSSIA