

PAUL HIEBERT—TWO TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND THE MAN

J. Robert Clinton, February 2007

Professor of Leadership, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary

I studied Theory of Anthropology with Paul Hiebert in my course work for my Doctor of Missiology degree. (Later, Hiebert became my mentor for my PhD.) During that course, there were 15 or so DMiss students. Each of us had to do a special paper on an anthropological topic studied in that course and each had to give a report on it to the entire class. I did mine on *structural time*.

Structural time became a major concept for use in my course ML560, Implementing Change in Christian Organizations, and in ML565, Organizational Dynamics. But more than that, it became a “teaching methodology.” I learned not only from my own presentation but also from other students’ presentations. I put this “teaching methodology” into as many of my courses as time allowed. ML540, Leadership Training Models, and ML523, Mentoring, were ideal courses (i.e., minimum training model courses) for this technique. In other courses, I did modified versions of it — allowing students to report certain things in class — even if it was not a whole paper. Students learn both by presenting and by hearing other students present.

In addition to the “student sharing a major project” in class, I picked up my notion of spiritual formation from Paul Hiebert. He began each class period — I had several courses with him — with something from the Word that touched my heart. I picked up on this and modified it to fit me, but the original idea came from him.

I want to pay tribute to Paul Hiebert, the man. He was a good doctoral mentor for me who lived just down the street. (We were in Hastings Ranch area at that time.) I was on faculty, teaching leadership courses full time and working on my PhD. Paul guided me through my PhD work, putting a “research base” to leadership emergence theory, the dominant field of my teaching. (ML530, Life Long Development, is the base course, putting feet to my PhD work; ML521, Developing Leadership Giftedness, ML523, Mentoring, and ML524, Focused Lives, were spin-off courses from ML530. Each of the spin-off courses researched further aspects of Life Long Development). Hiebert was the man who so graciously guided me through the PhD, in use of qualitative methods. I will never forget my final tutorial with him, going through it in his home and being orally tested on it. That was a real privilege. He is a Christian gentleman, a scholar who has a heart for the Lord.

Paul is now in the final stages of terminal cancer, and he is “finishing well!” His gracious loving spirit shines through all the pain and knowledge that the end is near. Taking a look at six characteristics of finishing well, I give him top marks for each one:

Characteristic 1. Relationship With God

A leader finishing well maintains a personal, vibrant relationship with God, right up to the end.

Characteristic 2. Learning Posture

A leader finishing well maintains a learning posture and can learn from various kinds of sources, especially from life.

Characteristic 3. Christ-Likeness

A leader finishing well evidences Christ likeness in character as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Characteristic 4. People of Convictions

Truth is lived out in the lives of leaders finishing well so that convictions and promises of God are seen to be real.

Characteristic 5. Leave a Legacy

A leader finishing well leaves behind one or more ultimate contributions. (Paul is saint, mentor, researcher, writer, stylistic practitioner.)

Characteristic 6. Fulfill a Destiny

A leader finishing well walks with a growing sense of destiny and see some or all of it fulfilled.

For me, Paul scores very, very high on each Destiny. He is a good model who inspires others like me to want to finish well. He can echo with an earlier Paul, “The time for me to depart this life is near. I have run a good race. I have fulfilled my God-given destiny. I still have my faith intact. And now for my prize, a crown of righteousness. The Lord, the righteous judge, will award it to me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all those who eagerly await his return.” *2 Timothy 4:6-8*