

Developing Leaders Who Serve

**Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 6**

by

Duane L. Anderson

Developing Leaders Who Serve

**Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 6**

**Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982
by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.**

**American Indian Bible Institute
Box 511
Norwalk, CA 90651-0511
www.aibi.org**

**Copyright © 2003, 2017 Duane L. Anderson, American Indian Bible Institute
This resource is available free of charge from aibi.org
ANY REPRODUCTION OF MATERIAL FOR RESALE OR PROFIT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED
Updated 10/2017**

Growing Christian Leaders Series

The “Growing Christian Leaders Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.’” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Christian Leaders Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

Table of Contents

	Page
1. The Leader who Serves	1
2. The Leader who Serves - The Evangelist	4
3. The Leader who Serves - The Pastor	7
4. The Leader who Serves - The Teacher	10
5. Building the Leadership Team	13
6. Learning to be Leader who Serves	16
7. Learning to Serve People at their Level of Spiritual Maturity	19
8. Learning to Serve People at their Level of Spiritual Maturity - Part 2	22
9. Learning to Help People Develop Vision	25
10. Learning to Help People develop Their Purpose in Life	28
11. Learning to Help People Develop an Action Plan for Their Lives	30
12. Learning to Help People Put that Plan of action into Action	33

1.

The Leader Who Serves

In Mark 10:42-45, we see that Christ taught that spiritual leadership is just the opposite of worldly leadership. Those verses tell us, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

In these verses, we see that a spiritual leader is very different from a worldly leader. A worldly leader likes to be the master over others. A worldly leader likes to exercise his authority and power. Today, many Christian leaders have chosen to lead in a worldly way because they like to exercise authority and power over others. However, Christ says that spiritual leadership is to be just the opposite. Instead, spiritual leadership is to be exercised by service.

Spiritual leadership is serving others and helping them grow to spiritual maturity so that they become reproductive Christians. Peter shared this same thought in 1 Peter 5:1-3 when he wrote, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

We learn several things from these verses written by Peter. From these verses, we see the following important lessons:

- Peter provides an example of a leader who serves by choosing to exhort or encourage rather than to command
- Peter views himself as a fellow elder and not the chief elder
- Peter reminds us that the leader is a shepherd of the flock of God which points out that the flock belongs to God rather than any man
- Peter reminds us that shepherds are to serve as overseers to the flock – to look after and care for the flock just as a shepherd cares for his sheep
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to serve willingly and not because they are forced to lead
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to lead eagerly and not for self-gain
- Peter reminds us that leaders are not to try and exercise power over others
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to lead by example

Paul explains how we lead by serving in Ephesians 4:11-13 where we read, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In these verses, we see a variety of leaders mentioned.

Ephesians 2:19-20 explains about the first two types of leaders mentioned. Those verses tell us, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*.” In these verses, we see the apostles and prophets provided the foundation for the church with Christ as the chief cornerstone. The reason why these two are the foundation is due to the fact that:

- The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ – Acts 1:21-22
 - The prophets gave us the written Word of God – 2 Peter 1:19-21
- Today, we no longer have any eyewitnesses of the resurrection and we have no one giving us new revelation that has the authority of the Word of God. That is why those two ministries are our foundation that was laid in the first century.

However, Ephesians 4:11 points out that we do have evangelists, pastors and teachers. It is important to see why we have these leaders in order to understand how a spiritual leader leads by serving. Ephesians 4:12 says that Christ has given us people with these gifts, “...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” There is no gift of evangelism. Instead, God has given us evangelists to equip every saint and show us how to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. God has given us pastors to equip all the saints and show us how to minister to one another. God has given us teachers to equip all the saints to teach the Word of God and show us how to obey the Word in our daily lives.

Interestingly enough, Christ did not give any Christian all of these gifts. Instead, Christ gave leaders only one of these gifts. Paul is never called a pastor-teacher and Philip is never called an evangelist-pastor. When Paul and Barnabas organized the churches in Galatia, they did not appoint a senior pastor for each church. Instead, Acts 14:23 tells us, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In this verse, we notice several things:

- ◆ The leaders were a part of each local group and did not come from another place
- ◆ The leaders were not even given a particular title such as evangelist, pastor or teacher
- ◆ The leaders were selected with prayer and fasting
- ◆ The leaders were entrusted to the Lord for guidance
- ◆ The leaders were able to carry on the leadership of each church because they had believed in the Lord

One of the things we notice about these leaders is that they felt that their leadership involved equipping every saint for the work of the ministry. By the time Paul returned to this area a few years later, Acts 16:5 tells us, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” In Acts 2:47 the number of people being added to the church was increasing daily. However, by Acts 16:5 we see that the number of churches was increasing daily. This was happening in Galatia even though Paul and Barnabas had not been in the area during the intervening time.

From this we see that the leaders of every local church took seriously their responsibility to equip every saint for the work of the ministry. Within the leadership team of each local church:

1. The evangelists were equipping the saints for the work of evangelism by showing them how to share the Gospel.
2. The pastors were equipping the saints by showing them how to minister effectively to one another.
3. The teachers were equipping the saints to teach the Word of God and showing them how to obey it in their daily lives.

We will see in the following topics how these three groups of leaders equipped the saints in the early churches for these various ministries. At this point, we just want to summarize what happens when the leaders take their responsibility to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:12-13 tell us God gave us our leaders, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” When spiritual leaders are faithful in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, the results are:

The body of Christ is being built up
The body of Christ develops unity of the faith
The body of Christ develops unity in their knowledge of Christ
The body of Christ is brought to spiritual maturity
The body of Christ is becoming more like Christ

Most of you who are reading these topics are already spiritual leaders in your churches. You might want to ask yourself, the following questions, “In what way has the Lord gifted me to serve other Christians by equipping them for the work of the ministry?” “Am I being obedient by equipping Christians to do the work of the ministry?” May the Lord richly bless you as you equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

The Leader Who Serves – The Evangelist

In our last topic, we gave a basic foundation for the leader who serves. Today, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the evangelist. Then, in the next two topics we will build on that foundation as it relates to the pastor and the teacher. In Ephesians 4:11-12, we see that evangelists are to, “Equip the saints for the work of the ministry”. There is no gift of evangelism. Instead, Christ has equipped certain spiritual leaders called evangelists to equip all the saints to do the work of evangelism.

In Acts 8:1-4, we see that persecution came to the church that was at Jerusalem. In verse one, we see that most of the Christians were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria except the apostles. Then, in Acts 8:4 we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” The rest of Acts 8 focuses on the ministry of one man named Philip. In Acts 8:5-25, we see that Philip shared the Gospel in Samaria where Peter and John later joined him. In Acts 8:26-39, we see Philip sharing the Gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. However, in this chapter we do not see that Philip is called an evangelist. Instead, we see that he was just an obedient Christian sharing the Gospel wherever he went. This is illustrated in Acts 8:40 where we read, “But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

It is more than twenty years later that we next read about Philip. Acts 21:8 tells us that Philip was still in Caesarea after all of those years, “On the next *day* we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him.” In this verse, we see two things about Philip:

- He is called Philip, the evangelist
- He was one of the original seven appointed to care for the needs of the widows in Acts 6

As you notice by comparing Acts 8:1-40 and Acts 21:8, Philip fled from Jerusalem due to the persecution and first went north to the city of Samaria where he shared the Gospel. The Lord interrupted his ministry there and sent him south to take the road that goes southwest from Jerusalem to the town of Gaza. There he shared the Gospel with the eunuch from Ethiopia along that road. The next place we see him is in the town of Azotus, a few miles north of Gaza. From there Philip took the road along the coast until he came to the city of Caesarea. As he traveled along this road, Philip shared the gospel in all of the cities along the road.

Once Philip reached the city of Caesarea, we see that he established a home and developed a family in that city. He apparently remained in that city for the rest of his life. However, Acts 21:8 tells us that he was an evangelist. In Acts 8, we see that Philip did much evangelism but he is not called an evangelist there because he was just being an obedient Christian like all of the others who were scattered from Jerusalem. Once he settled down in Caesarea, the leaders of the church recognized that Christ had given Philip the gift of evangelist and he apparently spent the rest of life equipping the Christians in the city of Caesarea to do the work of evangelism.

By comparing these passages, we learn some important things about the equipping gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-12. Philip had learned how to share the Gospel in the city of Jerusalem. As a result, he shared the Gospel wherever he went. As far as we can tell, no one was traveling with him as he shared the Gospel in Acts 8. However, once Philip got to Caesarea and became a part of the church there, it became his habit for the rest of his life to take others with him as he shared the Gospel so that others could learn how to share the Gospel by the example of Philip.

In addition to the references in Acts 21:8 and Ephesians 4:11, the only other place where the word “evangelist” is used is in 2 Timothy 4:5. In that verse, Timothy is told, “But you be watchful in all

things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

In 1 Timothy 4:11-16, we see that Timothy was told to do several things, “These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” In these verses, we see that Timothy:

- ◆ Was to teach others to practice godliness
- ◆ Was to be an example to others
- ◆ Was to faithfully share the Word of God
- ◆ Was to exercise his spiritual gift
- ◆ Was to give himself wholly to doing these things
- ◆ Was to continue to be both an example and a teacher of sound doctrine

Verse 14 tells us that Timothy had a spiritual gift that had been recognized by the other leaders of the church. Then, we have already seen that Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist in 2 Timothy 4:5. That brings us to the question of how an evangelist carries out his work. Timothy was given instructions about the way he was to do his work in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” In this verse, we see the way that Timothy was told to carry out his work as an evangelist. He was to commit the things that Paul and others had shared with him to other faithful men so that they could become reproductive disciples.

Paul tells us about himself in 1 Timothy 2:7 when he says, “...for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” In this verse, we see that Paul had a different equipping gift than Timothy. However, that did not hinder his ability to help Timothy develop and become a mature spiritual leader with a different equipping gift.

In Acts 16:1-3 we read, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” Timothy learned from Paul and Silas as they traveled and ministered together. Timothy gained Bible knowledge but even more important he was shown the way to walk (character) and he was shown how to do the work of ministry. Now, Paul was telling Timothy to train faithful men in the same way that he and Silas had trained Timothy.

Paul had mentioned earlier to the Christians in Corinth that Timothy would remind them of his ways. 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 says, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul knew that Timothy would be able to remind them about the character of Paul because Timothy had witnessed that character over an extended period of time.

Timothy was to take faithful men with him as he ministered so that they could grow in Bible knowledge, continue to grow in godly character and become equipped for effective ministry. These faithful men would be learning both from Timothy and from one another as they ministered together. Whatever equipping gifts these faithful men developed as they matured spiritually, they would be effective at developing others because they had been shown by example how to equip others for effective ministry.

The Lord calls all of us to share our lives with one another so that we can continue to grow in knowledge, character and ministry. If you do not know how to share the Gospel effectively with others, go regularly with some one who does so that you can learn from the example of that person. If you are effective at sharing the Gospel and leading others to Christ, regularly take others with you so that they can observe your example of how to share the Gospel with others. You will grow in the effectiveness of ministry as you observe others and they will grow in effectiveness as they observe you. May the Lord richly bless you as you minister with others and give others an opportunity to grow by observing your example.

3.

The Leader Who Serves – the Pastor

Two topics ago, we gave a basic foundation for the leader who serves. In our last topic, we talked about the leader who has the gift of evangelist. Today, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the pastor. Then, in the next topic, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the teacher. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we see that Pastors are to, “Equip the saints for the work of the ministry”. Today, we will see that Christ has equipped certain spiritual leaders called pastors to equip all the saints to do the work of ministering to one another.

The word that is translated “pastor” in Ephesians 4:11 is used eighteen times in the New Testament. The other seventeen times it is translated by the word “shepherd”. Part of these uses speak of the fact that Christ is the Good Shepherd or the Great Shepherd. In Luke 2, it is used several times to talk about the shepherds who came to visit Christ at His birth. In John 10, Christ uses the word shepherd several times as He describes the ministry of the shepherd. However, John 10:16 makes a very important statement when it says, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.” In this verse, Christ makes it clear that He is the One Shepherd which means that all other shepherds are undershepherds.

It is in this larger context that we must interpret the parable that Christ gave His disciples about the shepherd in John 10:1-5. Those verses tell us, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

In this parable, we learn several very important lessons about how undershepherds are to care for a part of the flock. Undershepherds:

- Enter into the sheepfold by the door (relationship)
- Call the sheep by name that they lead (fellowship)
- Lead the sheep rather than drive them (leadership)
- Go before the sheep (protection)
- Are followed by the sheep because they know his voice (caring)
- Are easily distinguished by their difference from strangers and hirelings – John 10:12-13 (commitment)

This brings us back to the work of undershepherds in Ephesians 4:11-12. In those verses, we see that undershepherds (pastors) are to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That ministry is to care for one another. In fact, the New Testament gives us a list twelve things that we are to avoid in our ministry to one another and thirty-one things that we are to learn to do in our ministry to one another. Of the thirty-one positive one anothers, the one that is mentioned most frequently is given as our new commandment in John 13:34-35 where we read, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We are told to love one another in fifteen different verses. In other words, the most important work of an undershepherd is to show us how to love one another.

If we take the thirty-one one anothers in alphabetical order, the first two are to accept one another

and to admonish one another. We will take those two to illustrate how undershepherds help us learn to do these two things.

First, Romans 15:7 says, “Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.” (NAS) The word that is translated “accept” or “receive” means “*to take to oneself, to take into one’s home to show kindness to or to grant one access to one’s heart*”. In this verse, we see that we are to accept one another in the very way that Christ accepted us. That kind of acceptance does not come naturally because the world is more likely to judge one another than to accept one another. Instead, that kind of acceptance must be taught from the Word of God and modeled by example. As a result, undershepherds will only be effective at teaching others to accept one another as they provide an example of loving acceptance.

Romans 14:1-3 tells us how to model that acceptance by contrasting acceptance and judging. Those verses tell us, “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.” The particular problem in these verses was whether Christians should eat meat that had been offered to idols.

In these verses, we see that some Christians felt it was all right to eat meat that had been offered to idols while others felt that it was wrong to eat such meat. In these verses, Paul did not tell them whether it was right or wrong to eat such meat. Instead, Paul taught the much more important principle about how we are to accept each other even though we may disagree about what things are right and what things are wrong. We see that we are to accept the one who is weak in faith and not pass judgment on his opinions. At the same time, we are not to judge or have contempt toward a person who has different opinions than we do. We see that God accepts both the Christians who have many self imposed rules and those who have few self imposed rules.

This is illustrated very clearly in Acts 21:20-24 where we read, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law...’” In this verse, we see that thousands of Jews who had become Christians still abstained from eating unclean animals (many rules) but that Paul accepted them in the same way that he accepted the Gentiles who ate such animals (few rules).

Second, Romans 1:7 tells us, “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints.” Then, Romans 15:14 tells us, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” In these verses, we see that Romans was written to all of the Christians that were in Rome. Then, we see that all of these Christians were able to admonish one another (give instruction that is primarily a warning). Here, we see that the undershepherds in Rome had equipped the Christians so that they knew how to admonish one another. This is an effective illustration of how the undershepherds are to equip the saints to minister to one another and not to try to do all of the admonishing themselves.

Just as evangelists are to equip all of the saints to share the Gospel with those who are not yet

Christians, pastors (undershepherds) are to equip the saints to minister to one another. As we have seen with both evangelists and pastors, their work is not primarily to do the work of the ministry but rather to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That does mean that they do plenty of ministry because they are taking others with them as they minister so that they can train others by their example. However, their primary work is showing other Christians how to minister rather than doing all of the ministry themselves.

It is the desire of Christ that every Christian be equipped both to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians and also to be equipped to minister to other Christians. That will only happen as spiritual leaders take the other Christians with them as they minister. Christ has given each of us who are spiritual leaders the opportunity to help all Christians grow in knowledge, godly character and ministry as we minister together both to non-Christians and Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip other Christians to minister by your example as they go with you.

4.

The Leader Who Serves – The Teacher

Three topics ago, we gave a basic foundation for the leader who serves. In our last two topics, we talked about the leader who has the gift of evangelist and the leader who has the gift of pastor. Today, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the leader who has the gift of teacher. In Ephesians 4:11-12, we see that teachers are to, “Equip the saints for the work of the ministry”. Today, we will see that Christ has equipped certain spiritual leaders called teachers to equip all the saints to teach the Word of God and show the saints how to apply the Word in daily living.

In 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11, Paul called himself a teacher. In 1 Timothy 2:7, Paul said, “For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” Then, in 2 Timothy 1:11 he said, “To which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” The only other time the word preacher is used is in 2 Peter 2:5 where it refers to Noah.

The other word with the same basic meaning as preacher is the word ambassador which is used to describe Paul and all believers in 2 Corinthians 5:20 where we read, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” A preacher or ambassador is a messenger who represents the King of heaven. As ambassadors, we are to plead with the people of the world to be reconciled to God, the true King. In this verse, we see that God is pleading with the world through us.

We mentioned in an earlier topic that Paul was appointed as an apostle. We saw from Acts 1:21-22 that the key ministry of the apostles was to be an eyewitness of the resurrection. Paul saw Christ on the road to Damascus because God had appointed him to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

The third word Paul used to describe himself is a teacher of the Gentiles. The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 12:28 where we read, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.” As we see in Ephesians 4:11-13, the primary ministry of teachers is for “...equipping the saints for the work of ministry...” just as that is also the primary ministry of evangelists and pastors.

Paul gives us a key to understand how Teachers equip the saints for the work of the ministry in Acts 20:20 where we read, “*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.” Acts 19:8-10 shows us that Paul taught these people publicly in the synagogue and in the school of Tyrannus. However, he also went to the homes and gave instruction to the individuals and households.

In the public meetings, Acts 19:9 tells us that the primary method that Paul used was discussion. Christ used a similar approach when He was in the temple at the age of twelve. Luke 2:46 says, “Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.” Often today the church has adopted the Greek method of teaching which was lecture rather than the Hebrew method of teaching which was discussion and questions. Today, many Christians are familiar with the Word of God, but they have no idea how to share the Word with others, because they have never learned to discuss the Word and both listen and ask questions.

In the meetings from house to house, Paul and the team with him would go to the various homes of those who became Christians to discuss the Word of God with their households. This provided a double opportunity. First, Paul and the team with him were able to discuss the questions of each

family. Second, this also provided an opportunity to share the Gospel with the people in that household that had not yet become Christians. Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:20 that he had shown them how to teach as he had taken them with him to visit the various households.

We see that Paul was not the only one to show developing leaders how to teach by taking them with him as he went from house to house. In Acts 2:46 we read, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Here, we see that the early church in Jerusalem also did much of their teaching in the homes of those who had become believers. In fact, the early church even had communion as they went from house to house. That provides an ideal opportunity to teach the Christians how to explain the Gospel. It also provides an ideal opportunity to share the Gospel with family members that are not yet Christians.

Of course, much of the ministry of Christ was carried on in the homes of people. In fact, we never read of Christ turning down an invitation to visit in a home including the homes of those who opposed him. Christ was teaching His disciples how to share the Gospel in Matthew 9:10-13 where we read, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what *this* means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

Christ taught the disciples how to recognize teachable moments as they observed while Christ talked to Mary and Martha about the resurrection when their brother Lazarus died. Christ also showed the disciples how to show love to these in sorrow that day. John 11:33-36 says, “Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. Then, the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’”

When Christ gave us the Great Commission, He also taught us a key lesson about teaching. Matthew 28:20 says, “...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” The word that is translated “observe” is usually translated “keep”. A good illustration of this is found in John 14:15 where Christ said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” As this verse makes it very clear, we are to teach people how to obey all that Christ has commanded.

True Biblical teaching teaches Christians how to obey what they are learning. As a result, as a teacher equips other Christians to teach the Word of God, he must focus equally on helping them show others how to obey what they are learning. In John 15:5, Christ told the disciples, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Then, in Philippians 4:13 Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

A key part of the ministry of the teacher is to help Christians learn to depend on the strength that Christ provides instead of their own strength. Dependence on Christ is best taught by example as the teacher models the fact that he is dependent on the Lord in all that he does. This means that the effective teacher is learning to yield to the Lord as a pattern of life. Romans 6:16 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?” As the teacher yields to Christ, he demonstrates that the Lord gives the strength to obey and live a righteous life.

Whether you have the gift of evangelist, pastor or teacher, you will be most effective at equipping the saints for the work of the ministry as you take people along with you as you minister. As we have mentioned, that helps people to:

- ◆ Grow in Biblical knowledge as they see you share the Word of God with others
 - ◆ Grow in godly character as they see godly character modeled in your life
 - ◆ Grow in effective ministry as they are shown how to obey all that Christ has commanded
- The Lord multiplies our ministry as we show others how to obey all that Christ has commanded
May the Lord richly bless you as you equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

5.

Building the Leadership Team

In our last four topics, we have talked about the fact that God has given evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. In many churches and church plants, the person who has the title of “pastor” may have the gift of pastor or he may have the gift of evangelist or teacher. The particular equipping gift of the one who has the title of “pastor” will usually be revealed by what he focuses on in his ministry. As a result, many churches do not have a balanced ministry because the ministry of the church is focused around the gift of the pastor.

In addition, many pastors focus on doing the work of the ministry rather than equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry. This results in most of the Christians either doing nothing or becoming busy in activities rather than doing the work of the ministry. When this happens, many Christians grow in Bible knowledge if they are hearing good Biblical sermons but they fail to grow in their spiritual maturity because they are not being shown the way to walk (godly character) or how to do the work of the ministry.

In Acts 14:21-23 we read, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In these verses, it does not mention that Paul and Barnabas appointed a pastor for each church. Instead, it tells us that they appointed elders in every church. These leaders came from within the congregation and among them possessed the various equipping gifts.

As we take various Christians with us as we minister to people where they live, work and spend their free time, we are showing these Christians how to grow in godly character, grow in Biblical knowledge and grow in effective ministry. As these Christians grow and become spiritually mature, they will join us in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. Along the way, we begin to notice the focus of their ministry. That will help us to recognize the equipping gift that the Lord has given to each of these individuals.

In John 1:38-39 we read, “Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ They said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which is to say, when translated, “Teacher”), ‘where are You staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).” In these verses, we see that Christ invited two men to just come and spend time with Him. For the next three and a half years, these men spent an increasing amount of time with Christ.

We will build a godly leadership team in a church or other ministry in the same way. As we have a team of people who are spending an increasing amount of time with us as we minister to people, they will be growing spiritually and will develop an effective ministry where they are able to develop additional leaders in the same way. Paul describes the results of this process so well in 1 Corinthians 4:17 where we read, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” In this verse, we see that:

- Paul was able to send Timothy out to minister in his place
- Paul had treated Timothy as a beloved son in the Lord
- Paul had treated Timothy as a faithful son in the Lord
- Paul knew Timothy would remind them of his ways (his course of conduct including his ways

of thinking, feeling and deciding)

- Paul said that his course of conduct and the things that he had shown and explained in his teaching were the same in every church

In addition to taking a team with you as you minister, there are also certain things that you want them to observe and learn to do. In Matthew 13:10-11 we read, “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.’” One of the key things we see in these verses is that Christ wanted the disciples to know why He did what He did. In this case, Christ was not revealing the meaning of what He taught to the crowd. However, He wanted to make certain that the disciples understood what He taught.

In the same way, we need to help developing leaders know why we do what we do. It is easy in leadership not to take the time to explain why we do what we do. When that happens, those we are leading become focused on the methods rather than the principles. For many years, churches had an evangelistic service on Sunday night. The original reason why that was done on Sunday night was due to the fact that churches were often the first to get electric lights so those who did not have electricity would come to the church in the evening just to see the lights. However, the leaders who originally used that method never explained why they had an evangelistic service on Sunday night. As a result, many churches continued to have an evangelistic service on Sunday night even when non-Christians no longer came on Sunday night.

We want to help the leadership team realize that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature – Mark 16:15, then help them determine what ways are the most effective in their lives to regularly share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. The ways that different people are effective in sharing the Gospel will vary widely because of their SHAPE:

S spiritual gifts

H heart or passion for ministry

A abilities

P personality

E experiences in life

Paul illustrates the principle of sharing the Gospel in the ways that were most effective for the people he was trying to reach in Acts 17:17 where we read, “Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” In the case of Paul, he shared the Gospel in the synagogue with the Jews and Gentile worshipers because that was where they could be found regularly. However, Paul knew that approach was totally ineffective for the general mass of society. As a result, Paul shared the Gospel in the marketplace daily with those who came to the marketplace to do their shopping.

In contrast, Paul shared the Gospel with Aquila and Priscilla as he worked with them making tents in their home in Acts 18:1-3. As a result, Aquila and Priscilla learned to use their home very effectively for ministry. Later, they began their ministry in Ephesus by taking Apollos with them to their home where they explained the way of God to him more perfectly – Acts 18:26. Later, they moved to Rome and used their home to start a church in that city – Romans 16:3-5. The principle that Paul, Aquila and Priscilla all recognized was that they were to share the Gospel in the places where they could most effectively reach people.

God calls us to build a leadership team where each member of the team will use their particular SHAPE to minister to people most effectively wherever that happens to be. As Peter said in 1 Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” We are to equip them to use their gifts and not to carry out our programs. If they are taught to depend on the Lord and

focus on principles rather than programs Ephesians 3:20-21 tells how the Lord will work in and through their lives, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” May the Lord richly bless you as you develop a leadership team.

6.

Learning to be a Leader Who Serves

In the world, the most common style of leadership is what is known as top down leadership. Christ defined that style of leadership in Mark 10:42 where we read, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.’” In this verse, we see that the leadership of the world loves to control others.

However, Christ said that is not to be the style of spiritual leadership. Mark 10:43-45 goes on to say, “...Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” What Christ defines here is what we might call bottom-up leadership. This style of leadership is opposite to worldly leadership, but it is essential if we are going to develop godly reproducing leaders.

Bottom-up leadership is understood better when we look at Ephesians 2:19-20 where we read, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*.” In these verses, we see that Christ is the chief cornerstone. Christ is that great massive Rock on which the church is built. On that great massive Rock, the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church. The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ – Acts 1:21-22. The prophets gave us the written Word of God – 2 Peter 1:19-21. From this we see that Christ, the apostles and the prophets all had the opportunity to serve all of the people of the world.

In our last topic, we saw that the Lord also led in the appointment of elders in every church – Acts 14:23. Then, in the three topics before that, we saw that Christ gave:

Evangelists to equip the saints to share the Gospel.

Pastors to equip the saints to minister to one another

Teachers to equip the saints to teach the Word of God and apply it to their lives.

We have also seen that God has given each Christian a unique “SHAPE”:

S - spiritual gifts

H - heart or passion for ministry

A - abilities

P - personality

E - experiences in life

Just as Christ, the apostles and the prophets served all people through their ministries, we are to serve those with whom the Lord brings us in contact in our ministries. Here, it is essential to remember that Christ did not give us an equipping gift to be served. Instead, Christ gave us an equipping gift to serve others. If we have the gift of evangelist, we are to take other Christians with us and show them how to make contacts and share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. If we have the gift of pastor, we are to take other Christians with us and show them how to minister to other Christians. If we have the gift of teacher, we are to take other Christians with us and show them how to teach the Word of God and help people learn how to apply the Word to their lives.

The Lord wants each Christian to learn to minister effectively with the spiritual “SHAPE” that the Lord has given to that person. That means that Christ wants each Christian to learn to share the Gospel in the way that will be most effective for that person. By going along with a person who has the gift of evangelist, the learner will learn the basic content of the Gospel message. The basic

content of the Gospel does not change. Their spiritual “SHAPE” will determine however, the way that people make contacts and build relationships to share the Gospel.

A Christian with the gift of serving will become equipped to share the Gospel by going along and observing the basic content of the message that is taught and how it is taught. However, that Christian will then use his gift of serving to make contacts and build relationships for the purpose of sharing the Gospel. Another person with the gift of teaching (doctrine) who has gone with the same person will make contacts and build relationships and share the Gospel in a very different way. A key factor though will be the fact that both Christians will have grown in godly character as they have observed the character of the more mature Christian who was showing them how to share the Gospel.

The leader who serves will make it a point to try and understand the spiritual “SHAPE” of each of those going along with him so that he can give each one specific ideas about possible ways that the Lord may use their “SHAPE” to share the Gospel effectively. For example, the person who has the gift of showing mercy and has also had the experience of the death of a close relative in the past couple of years can be given ideas about how to share the Gospel with those who are suffering or grieving. In contrast, a person who has musical abilities can be given ideas about how to share the Gospel with the musical group of which he is a part. The leader is serving because he has taken the time to understand each person and their “SHAPE” and given possible ideas about how to share the Gospel.

In a similar way, the person who has the gift of pastor will show others how to minister to other Christians as he takes them along with him as he ministers to other Christians. If a person has a speaking gift, he can be given ideas about how to serve other Christians by the way that he speaks. If the person has a serving gift, he can be given ideas about how to serve other Christians by the things that he does – 1 Peter 4:11. A person who has a shy personality can often be given ideas about how to serve individual Christians while a person with an outgoing personality may prefer ideas about ways to serve with groups of Christians.

The person who has the gift of teacher will show others how to teach the Word of God and help people learn to apply it to their lives as he takes other Christians with him. If the one with the gift of teacher knows the heart of passion of those he takes with him, he will be able to give ideas about the kinds of teaching that will really get them excited. I often ask the question, “If you could do anything you wanted to serve the Lord for the rest of your life, what would get you most excited?” That question will usually reveal the heart of the person and show what gets that person excited. Then, you can share with that person ideas about ways he can teach the Word of God while carrying out the ministry that really gets him excited.

A key thing to remember as we give ideas is to share with each person that these are only ideas and that the Lord may give them totally different ideas about how to minister effectively. If a person shares an idea that he or she has been thinking about as a way to minister, encourage that person to try out their idea and see how the Lord uses that idea. Often, people will be given ideas by the Lord that far surpass the ideas that we might suggest because the Lord has given that person ideas that fit his or her spiritual “SHAPE”.

Our ministry as a spiritual leader is to serve each Christian and help each Christian develop the full potential that the Lord has given that person. If we:

- ◆ Drive a person, that person will only be driven until he can get out of the way
- ◆ Lead a person, we can lead that person as far as we have gone
- ◆ Serve a person, we can help that person reach his or her full potential which may go far beyond our personal potential

One of the great joys of the Christian life is to see Christians that we have served go far beyond

what we could ever do. What actually happens is that each person that we serve actually multiplies the ministry that the Lord has given to us. That was what happened in the early church. In Acts 6:1 and 6:7, we read that the number of disciples multiplied. Then, in Acts 9:31 we see that the number of churches multiplied. The process moved from addition to multiplication because the early leaders of the church chose to serve those who became Christians and equip them for the work of the ministry. This is seen so clearly in Acts 8:1-4 where the apostles stayed in Jerusalem and the Christians who were scattered by persecution, “Went everywhere preaching the Word.”

The Lord has given you a very special privilege as a Christian leader. God has called you to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry.” May the Lord richly bless you as you multiply your ministry by equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

Learning to Serve People at their Level of Spiritual Maturity

In our last topic, we talked about learning to be a leader who serves. In our topic today, we will be talking about serving people at their present level of spiritual maturity. One of the things that I have found through the years is that most people can only understand one level of spiritual maturity beyond the level that they are at right now. As a result, we serve best when we recognize their present level of spiritual maturity and help them continue to develop at that stage of growth.

The New Testament talks about a variety of levels of spiritual maturity. These levels of spiritual maturity can easily be compared to the same levels of physical maturity because there are similar needs in the physical and the spiritual. Scripture talks about the following levels of spiritual maturity:

- ◆ The non-Christian – this is the person who has not yet become a Christian
- ◆ The new born babe – 1 Peter 2:2 – this is the person who has just become a Christian
- ◆ The spiritual toddler – 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 5:11-14 – this is the person who started to grow and then stopped growing
- ◆ The spiritual child – 1 John 2:12-14
- ◆ The spiritual young man – 1 John 2:12-14
- ◆ The spiritual parent – 1 John 2:12-14; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12
- ◆ The spiritual Timothy – Acts 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:17
- ◆ The spiritual Timothy with faithful men – 2 Timothy 2:2
- ◆ The spiritual Timothy with faithful men who are teaching others also – 2 Timothy 2:2

Spiritual leadership means we can be effective serving the spiritual needs of all of the people who are above us on this list. A person who is a new Christian can serve the non-Christian by sharing the Gospel with him. A person who is a spiritual parent can serve the spiritual needs of spiritual young men, spiritual children, spiritual toddlers, spiritual new born babes and those who are not yet Christians. In addition, we can also be an encouragement to all regardless of our present level of spiritual maturity. In 2 Corinthians 7:5-7, Paul talks about the tremendous encouragement that Titus gave to him by his coming to Paul.

To understand the needs of Christians at various levels of spiritual maturity, we need to understand the focus of a person at various levels of spiritual maturity. Below is a summary of the focus of Christians at different levels of maturity:

- The new born babe – food – 1 Peter 2:2
- The spiritual toddler – my needs, my problems – 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
- (this is the level where many churches are focusing today because contemporary trends have placed a focus on need-centered ministry)
- The spiritual child – growth – 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:13
- The spiritual young man – service – Acts 5:6, 10 (the young men served the church by burying the dead)
- The spiritual parent – care of spiritual children – 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12
- The spiritual Timothy – godly leadership development – 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2
- The spiritual Timothy with faithful men – indirect godly leadership development – 2 Timothy 2:2

We serve a new Christian by helping him begin to understand some of the basic teachings of the Word of God. Among other things, we want to help the new Christian understand his or her new relationship with Christ and learn to build his or her relationship with God. We also want to help the new Christian begin to move from fear to love – 1 John 4:18. (A resource available to help

focus on these things is the manual “New Life in Christ” which can be downloaded from the AIBI website and copied for use with new Christians.) The new Christian also needs a spiritual parent who will spend time with the new Christian to help him grow. We serve the new Christian by either spending time with the new Christian on a regular basis or asking another Christian who desires to be a spiritual parent to spend time with him – 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:7-12.

The spiritual toddler is someone who became a Christian, but did not continue to develop. The key reason for this lack of growth is explained in 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 where Paul writes, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” The Corinthians had many instructors or tutors but they had few fathers.

The word that is translated “instructor” spoke of the slave who was given the responsibility to raise a young boy by the Greeks and Romans. This slave often accomplished his task by using severe discipline. This word is only used three times in the New Testament. The other two times are in Galatians 3:24-25 where we read, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” In these verses, the word is translated “tutor” or “schoolmaster”. The law only punishes those who do wrong and does not provide an example of how to do right. That was why Paul said that the reason the Corinthians had not grown spiritually was due to the fact that they had many who gave rules, but few who provided an example to follow.

This also demonstrates very clearly the difference between Greek education and Hebrew education. The Greeks taught by lectures and made little or no effort to build relationships. Christ demonstrates the Hebrew form of education. He invited people to spend time with Him so that He could show them how to live and teach them as He spent time with them. The focus of Christ was on building relationships in which godly living could be demonstrated and Biblical principles could be taught in love. The Hebrew form of education was to provide a model to follow rather than a lecture or rules. The Hebrew form of education helps people to grow in character, knowledge and ministry while the Greek form of education provides only knowledge backed up by punishment.

Much of the world today has patterned their education after the Greek form of education. As in many other things, the church has followed the pattern of the world instead of following the example of Christ. The result for the church is that the church as a whole has the same problems that were present in the church in Corinth. One of those problems is the fact that many Christians have not grown beyond the spiritual toddler stage, including many people who have been Christians for thirty or more years.

In order to develop leaders who are learning to minister to people at their level of spiritual maturity, we must place the focus on showing people how to live the Christian life by example rather than just telling them what to do and not do. This means developing healthy relationships between new Christians and more mature Christians so that the more mature Christians can become spiritual parents who are leading the new Christians by example. Most people who become stuck at the spiritual toddler level have never had a spiritual parent who developed a loving caring relationship. As a result, they may have gained Bible knowledge but they have never been shown the way to walk (godly character) and they have never been shown the work to do (effective ministry).

The first step to help developing leaders learn to lead people at their level of spiritual maturity is to show these developing leaders by our own example how to build godly relationships with non-Christians, new Christians and struggling Christians. Then, we show these developing leaders by taking them with us as we spend time with non-Christians, new Christians and struggling Christians. Christ often ministered to struggling, hurting people but He had the disciples with Him as He ministered so that they were learning from His example. As we take people with us as we

minister, they will become what we are whether that is good or bad. That is good because it regularly causes us to examine our own lives to see if we are providing an example that we can encourage others to imitate.

The level of spiritual maturity of a developing leader should be that of a spiritual young man or a spiritual parent. They will learn how to be a spiritual parent to others as they see our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show developing spiritual leaders how to become spiritual parents to one or more new Christians.

Learning to Serve People at Their Level of Spiritual Maturity – Part 2

In our last topic, we talked about how to help developing leaders learn to serve new Christians and struggling Christians (spiritual toddlers) at their present level of spiritual maturity. We saw in our last topic that developing leaders need to be shown how to develop godly relationships with non-Christians, new Christians and struggling Christians. We said that we need to model spending time with these three groups by taking developing leaders with us as we minister to these groups. Today, we will focus on how we help developing leaders learn to serve growing Christians who have become spiritual children and spiritual young men.

In 1 John 2:12-13, we see the characteristics of a spiritual child. Those verses tell us, “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.” In these verses, we see two characteristics of spiritual children. Spiritual children:

- Know that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake.
- Know the Father.

One of the greatest tragedies in life is to meet a person who has been a Christian for many years who still does not know if his or her sins are forgiven. Part of the reason why they do not know if their sins are forgiven is due to the fact that they have never understood why God has forgiven their sins. In these verses, we see that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. God did not forgive our sins because of what we have done. Instead, God forgave our sins because Christ paid the penalty for our sin and the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ made. God did not forgive our sins for our sake but for Christ’s sake. A spiritual child has learned this and that has changed many of his fears. A developing leader needs to be shown how to help people understand that their sins are forgiven.

A second thing we see is that a spiritual child knows the Father. A key distinction to make here is to recognize that he knows the Father and not just that he knows about the Father. We can read a book and get to know all about a person who may have lived hundreds of years ago. However, we do not know that person. A person can read the Bible and know all about the Father but not know the Father. Romans 8:15 says, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” The word “Abba” is a word that speaks of the closeness of a relationship similar to our words “Papa” or “Daddy”. It is a word that speaks of a relationship that is characterized by dependence, tenderness and the absence of fear.

When a person grows to the point that the Christian is no longer controlled by fear, He is able to really get to know the Father. A developing leader needs to be shown how to help people understand why they can come boldly to the Father. This really begins with an understanding of what Christ has done for us. In Hebrews 4:14-16 we read, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ We have a High Priest who speaks for us to the Father
- ◆ We have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses
- ◆ We have a High Priest who was tempted just as we are tempted
- ◆ We have a High Priest who did not sin when He was tempted

- ◆ We have a High Priest who makes it possible to know that we will obtain mercy
- ◆ We have a High Priest who makes it possible to know that we will find grace to help us in our time of need (when we have sinned)

Hebrews 8:1-6 tells us that Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father where He is the mediator of the new covenant. The old covenant meant that the High Priest had to bring a covering for sins each year. First, he would go into the Holy of Holies to offer blood as a covering for his own sins. Second, he would go into the Holy of Holies to offer blood as a covering for the sins of the people. However, Christ entered into heaven and presented the offering of His blood to the Father. That blood did more than just cover sin. That offering was to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Now Christ sits at the right hand of the Father where He serves as the advocate (our defense attorney) for all those who have repented of sin and placed their trust in Christ (1 John 2:1-2). The Father says that He is satisfied with the payment for our sins (propitiation) and pronounces us without sin because the penalty for our sin has been paid and the sin has been removed. We can come boldly to the Father because it is not dependent on who we are but rather on what Christ has already done for us in the offering of His blood. Once a Christian understands this, he or she can come boldly to the Father without fear because the penalty for sin has already been paid and the sin has been removed from their record. This now makes it possible for them to really begin to know the Father and not just know about Him. That is why it is so important to help a developing leader learn to explain this clearly.

1 John 2:14 describes the spiritual young man. That verse tells us, “I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.” In this verse, we see the following three characteristics of a spiritual young man or spiritual young woman:

- A spiritual young man has become strong
- A spiritual young man has the Word of God abiding in him
- A spiritual young man is having victory over the wicked one

In order for a Christian to become strong, he or she needs to learn to yield to the Holy Spirit so that they consistently serve in the power of the Spirit instead of their own efforts. We need to help developing leaders learn to pray for those that they lead the same things that Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesians 3:14-21. Verse 16 says, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” A developing leader helps growing Christians learn to depend on the Holy Spirit and yield to the Holy Spirit by his example. We help the developing leader learn by our example and by helping him understand how to explain and apply verses like Ephesians 3:16 as he shares with younger Christians.

The second characteristic of a spiritual young man is that he has the Word of God abiding in him. One very helpful way that I have found to help a Christian become a person of the Word and begin to think Biblically is to encourage a new Christian to read the book of 1 John every day for a month. I choose 1 John since it frequently says my little children. Then, part way through the month, I start going through the book with him to explain the things that he does not understand.

When 1 John has been completed, I suggest he go to 1 Thessalonians since it was written to people who had only been Christians for a short time. If a developing leader has never had anyone do this with him, go through these two books with the developing leader in this way and show him by your example how to help new Christians become a person of the Word and begin to think Biblically.

The third characteristic of a spiritual young man is that he is having victory over the wicked one. This involves helping young Christians learn to understand the importance of choices and consequences and then help them learn to make wise choices and depend on Christ to give them strength to carry out those wise choices (Philippians 4:13). We help the developing leader learn to help other Christians in this area by teaching him the importance of choices and consequences.

A very effective way I have found to do this is when a developing leader asks a question about a decision, I answer that question with the question, "What are your choices?" each time he has a question. Usually, the person will offer one or two choices. Then, I will suggest other possible choices until there are about four or five choices. Then, I will ask the person to list both the good and the bad consequences that will happen under each choice.

I will then suggest that the person eliminate the choice that has the worst set of consequences. I will also usually suggest that they eliminate the choice with the next worst set of consequences. Then, I encourage the person to pray and ask the Lord to give him peace about which of the remaining choices would be the best choice in his situation. I then remind him that the Lord can give him the strength to carry out the choice that Christ leads him to make. I keep doing this with a developing leader until it becomes a part of his life and also the way that he has begun teaching others to make wise choices.

As developing leaders learn how to help other Christians in their growth, it also helps the developing leaders see how the Lord is helping them learn to think and act Biblically. They are learning not only what to do but why they do what they do. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to think and act Biblically.

Learning to Help People Develop Vision

In John 4:35, Christ told the disciples, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” In this verse, we see that one of the things that the disciples lacked when they first followed Christ was vision. The same thing is usually true today. As a result, we need to help developing leaders expand their vision so that they are able to help new Christians develop vision.

One of the things that we notice in this verse is that the disciples were in Samaria but they did not really see the people of Samaria as people needing to meet Christ. Instead, the context shows that their primary concern was lunch. They had gone into the town, talked to the people selling food, met other people on the street and never thought of the fact that those people also needed Christ. Today, the same thing continues to happen. Most Christians walk through the streets and shopping areas of a town or city and never think about the spiritual needs of the people there.

To develop effective spiritual leadership, first we must help people develop a vision for people rather than things. Let’s look at this context to see how Christ helped the disciples develop vision. In John 4:27 we read, “And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why are You talking with her?’” We notice that the disciples marveled that Christ was talking with the woman.

Second, we help developing leaders expand their vision by taking them with us as we talk to people about their spiritual needs. Developing leaders will not develop vision if they never see our vision. They will only see our vision as they go with us.

Third, in John 4:31-32 we read, “In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’” In these verses, we see that spiritual ministry was more important to Christ than physical food. Christ knew that He could always eat later. However, the opportunity to talk with the woman would be gone if He waited until later. Here, we see that we show developing leaders the importance of taking the opportunities that the Lord brings to us. Many Christians never see opportunities, because they are not looking for them.

In John 4:33-34 we read, “Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” Fourth, people develop vision when the will of God becomes the priority in their lives. Christ showed the disciples that His priority was to do the will of God. We provide an example of the importance of doing the will of God by the fact that doing the will of God is our first priority.

In Luke 18:15-16, we see another passage where Christ expanded the vision of the disciples. Those verses tell us, “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’” In these verses, we see that the disciples lacked vision both for the parents and for their children. In contrast, Christ had a vision for both the parents and their children.

Fifth, we see that Christ expanded the vision of the disciples by helping them to see the importance of touching the lives of young parents. The older an adult is, the easier it is for that adult to ignore the parents of young children. Today, we live in a day when many churches are only targeting certain age groups to reach for Christ. One of the groups often ignored is young parents. Developing leaders need to see the importance of reaching out to young parents. The disciples

rebuked the young parents who came bringing their infants.

Christ knew that to reach children the place to begin was to reach their parents while the children were infants. Most new parents want to do the best possible job of raising their children but often have not been shown how to raise children, especially if the young parents grew up in homes where their parents were not Christians. As a result, Christ reached out to both the parents and their young children. In the process, Christ showed by His example the importance of reaching out to all age groups. As we take developing leaders with us to visit young families, they learn Biblical answers to the questions that young families are asking about how to raise their children.

Sixth, Christ also had to expand the vision of the disciples to see and minister to hurting people. In John 9:1-2 we read, “Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” The disciples only saw the man as a topic for conversation. Christ saw the man as a person to be reached. Christ used that opportunity in verse 4 to tell the disciples, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work.” Christ expanded the vision of the disciples by helping them to see that we must work the works of the Father during the short time that we have in this life because life is short.

Seventh, Christ focused on finishing the work of the Father. In John 17:4, Christ was praying to the Father and said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Here, we see that Christ gave the disciples a vision to finish the work that the Father had given Him to do. Later, Christ would reinforce this vision to finish the work that the Father had given when He told the disciples in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” One of the things that was necessary to finish the work of the Father was to develop the vision of the disciples before sending them out to share the Gospel with others. In the same way, we must develop vision in order to finish the work that the Father has for us.

Eighth, vision is developed as we spend time together with leaders and developing leaders praying and seeking the will of the Lord. Acts 13:2 says, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Prayer is not something we do to get God to do what we want. Rather, prayer should be a time when we seek God and ask Him what He wants us to do. As developing leaders pray with us as we seek the will of the Lord, they learn to focus on obeying the will of the Father instead of their own will. In these times of concentrated prayer, the Lord has a wonderful way of expanding the vision of everyone.

Ninth, vision is developed as developing leaders learn to see the Holy Spirit close and open doors. In Acts 16:6-10 we read, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” The whole team with Paul had their vision expanded to begin reaching out to Europe because they were learning to be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

As we summarize this list, we see that we want to help developing leaders develop their vision by:

- ◆ Helping them to develop a vision for people rather than things
- ◆ Helping them to observe that we share the Gospel with others
- ◆ Helping them to see the importance of taking opportunities when they come
- ◆ Helping them to see that doing the will of God is the priority of our lives

- ◆ Helping them to see that people of all ages need Christ
- ◆ Helping them to see that hurting people need Christ
- ◆ Helping them to focus on finishing the work of the Father
- ◆ Helping them to focus on praying for the will of the Lord
- ◆ Helping them to focus on the leading of the Holy Spirit

We need to remember the vision that the Lord has for the people of the world. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The Lord will be able to use developing leaders as they have their vision expanded to see and reach people that they have not considered before. Then, they will be able to help new Christians also begin to develop a vision for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders expand their vision to see the world as Christ sees it.

Learning to Help People Develop Their Purpose for Life

In our last topic, we talked about how to help people develop a vision for others. Once people have a vision for others, we can begin to help them develop their purpose for life. Before people become Christians, their purpose is centered on the things of this earth. Years ago, I asked a young man who was not a Christian, “What is your purpose in life? His answer was, “My purpose and goal in life is to make money, lots of money.” Today, many people have a similar purpose.

A developing leader, who has developed a vision of what God wants to do in this world, has a new basis on which to develop a purpose for his life. The Christian who has a vision of what God wants to do in the world is now able to ask the question, “How can the Lord use me to help carry out His vision for the world?” That question was never possible before that person became a Christian.

Through the years, I have asked developing leaders a variety of different questions to help them focus on how the Lord wants to use them to carry out the Lord’s vision for the world. Some of those questions include:

- In the job that the Lord has given you to supply the needs of your family, in what ways are you able to carry out the vision of doing what the Lord wants to do in the world?
- What things really get you excited as you serve the Lord?
- If you could do anything you wanted to for the rest of your life, what would get you most excited in your service for the Lord?
- What is preventing you from doing the things that really get you excited in your service for the Lord?
- How can I serve you and help you become better equipped to do the things that will really make things exciting in your service for the Lord for the rest of your life?

In 2 Timothy 3:10, Paul gives some of the most important things that Timothy had been able to observe in Paul’s life. That verse says, “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance.” One of the things that we notice is that Timothy had been able to observe the purpose that Paul had for his life. Timothy had been able to see how that purpose motivated Paul in everything that he did. That purpose was spelled out both in his relationship to God and in his relationship to the ministry that God had laid on his heart.

In Philippians 3:10, Paul describes his purpose in his relationship with Christ, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” In Romans 15:20-21, Paul describes the purpose that he felt that God had given him in life, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written: “To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand.” Paul’s purpose in his:

- Relationship to God was to know Christ
- Relationship to ministry was to preach the Gospel where Christ had not been named

However, Barnabas and later Paul also helped others develop a purpose for their lives. In Acts 11:23, we read, “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” Barnabas realized that all Christians need a purpose at whatever point they are in their spiritual development. The new Christians at Antioch needed to focus on the purpose of heart to continue with the Lord. The word that is translated “continue” is actually a strengthened form of the word “abide” that is used several times in John 15. The new Christians were encouraged to make it their purpose to really abide in Christ. That way they could really get to know Christ and learn to depend on Him. Developing leaders need to be shown how to help new Christians learn to make it their purpose to build their

relationship with Christ.

While developing leaders are helping new Christians learn to make it their purpose to build their relationship with Christ, they can be praying that the Lord will give them a passion for an area of ministry in their own lives. They can begin to pray and ask the Lord what purpose He has for them as far as service to the Lord (ministry) is concerned. As the developing leaders pray, the Lord will begin to give them a passion for a particular area of ministry. That passion for that area of ministry will grow as they continue to serve the Lord. In fact, it will often begin to influence their thinking wherever they are. (In my own life, I cannot walk into a mall in another part of the country without thinking, What would it take to plant a church in this area? By the time I leave that mall, I usually have a pretty good idea just from the things that I have observed in that mall.)

Once people begin to realize the passion that the Lord has given them, they will realize that doing that type of ministry brings particular joy to their lives. For example, Colossians 4:12-13 tells us that Epaphras had a passion to help the saints in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis. That caused him to labor fervently for them in his prayers. Philippians 2:30 tells us that Epaphroditus had a passion to serve Paul. In fact, he came close to death just to serve Paul. 1 Corinthians 16:15 tells us that the family of Stephanas had a passion to serve the saints. This passion affected their prayer life, their service and everything else that they did.

Once we know what ministry really gets a developing leader excited in his or her life, then we can serve that developing leader by equipping him to carry out that ministry with increasing effectiveness. In the process, the developing leader will often discover a purpose for life that will allow him to exercise his spiritual gifts, his abilities and will fit his personality. In addition, that purpose will also use his experiences in life to carry out that ministry. We have served this developing leader because we have helped him to recognize his spiritual SHAPE:

S spiritual gifts
H heart or passion
A abilities
P personality
E experiences in life

We also bring joy to the life of the developing leader as we help him find opportunities to exercise his spiritual SHAPE. Every Christian has their joy increased as they begin to see the Lord both working in their lives to help them grow and through their lives as they have the opportunity to serve the Lord. Today, many Christians are not having the opportunity to experience that joy because no Christian has ever taken the time to serve them and help them discover their spiritual SHAPE and show them how to serve the Lord using that SHAPE.

As Christians discover the unique purpose that the Lord has for them in life, it brings joy and fulfillment to their life. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” The Lord is able to do more through any Christian than that Christian can ask for in prayer or even imagine in his or her thoughts because it is the power of God that is working through the life of a Christian that is yielding to Him.

God calls us to serve developing Christians and help them discover how the Lord wants to work in and through their lives. What a privilege we have to be able to be used by the Lord to help others experience the joy that Christ wants them to have as He works in their lives and through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders discover the purpose that God has for their lives.

Learning to Help People Develop an Action Plan for their Lives

In our last two topics, we have talked about how to help developing leaders develop a vision and a purpose for their lives. Although vision and purpose are both extremely important in a person's life, they mean nothing until the person develops a plan of action to help him begin to move from thoughts to actions. James 1:22-25 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

In these verses, we see several principles to help developing leaders develop a plan of action for their lives. These principles are:

- A healthy Christian becomes a doer of the Word of God
- A healthy Christian does not deceive himself by hearing and forgetting
- A healthy Christian is one who is regularly looking into the perfect law of liberty
- A healthy Christian is one who is continuing in the law of liberty
- A healthy Christian is a doer of the work that the Word tells him
- A healthy Christian will be blessed for obedience

First, a healthy Christian becomes a doer of the Word of God. A doer is one who obeys or fulfills the Word of God. This requires two things:

- * A person has to become familiar with the Word of God
- * A person has to obey and carry out what he learns from the Word of God

In order for a Christian to develop and become a godly spiritual leader, this verse points out that the person focuses on obedience to the Word of God. The healthy Christian learns to ask the same two questions each day that Saul asked on the road to Damascus as the Christian studies the Word:

- ◆ Who are you Lord?
- ◆ Lord, what do you want me to do?

Second, a healthy Christian does not deceive himself by hearing and forgetting. Matthew 7:24-27 says, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." In these verses, we see that a wise man hears the things that Christ teaches and obeys them. In contrast, the foolish man hears the things that Christ teaches and does not obey them. The healthy Christian has asked the two questions mentioned above. As he studies the Word, the Lord speaks to him through the Word. Then, the healthy Christian asks the Lord to give him the Lord's strength to carry out what the Word tells him to do.

Third, the healthy Christian is one who regularly looks into the perfect law of liberty. The law of liberty is the Word of God. Here, we see that the healthy Christian is one who has made it a regular habit to study the Word of God so that he is able to be obedient to the Word. The title "perfect law of liberty" is an important title to understand about the Word of God. Galatians 5:13-14 says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." True liberty is not the freedom to do what we want, but the power to do what we ought. The "perfect law of liberty" has set us free from our sin so that we have the

power as we yield to the Lord to truly love and serve one another.

Fourth, the healthy Christian is one who is continuing in the perfect law of liberty. The word that is translated “continue” means “*to remain in the place where we are*”. Here, we see that we are to remain in the perfect law of liberty. The basic thought here is that we learn the Word of God, obey the Word of God and continually practice what the Word of God tells us to do. Since the perfect law of liberty tells us to love and serve one another, loving and serving one another is something that is becoming a pattern of life in the healthy Christian. Galatians 5 goes on in the following verses to tell us how the Holy Spirit works in our lives to help us carry out the perfect law of liberty. We see that we are to:

- Walk in the Spirit – verse 16
- Be led by the Spirit – verse 18
- Bear the fruit of the Spirit – verses 22-23

These things lead us to the next thing James tells us.

Fifth, the healthy Christian is a doer of the work that the Word tells him. A doer of the work is one who is carrying out the work that the Word teaches us we are to do. When we walk in the Spirit and are led by the Spirit, we will see the Holy Spirit producing fruit in our lives. Christ told the disciples in Luke 24:48-49, “...And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Christ told the disciples (and us) the work to do. However, He also told the disciples that they needed the power of the Holy Spirit in order to do that work. The same is true for us. If we try to do the work that the Word teaches us to do in our own strength, we will fail. In contrast, when we do the work that the Word teaches us to do in the power of the Spirit, even the devil cannot stop us because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world – 1 John 4:4.

We are able to do the work of God with boldness as we pray and then depend on the Lord for His strength. Acts 4:29-31 tells us, “...Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

Sixth, a healthy Christian will be blessed for obedience. As each Christian does the work that the Lord has called and equipped that Christian to do, the Lord promises His blessing. Even when there are times of severe testing, James 1:2-4 promises us, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Here, we see that the Lord is using those times of testing to produce patience and bring us to spiritual maturity.

Every Christian can develop a plan of action for his or her life. Christ takes the unique spiritual SHAPE that He has given each of us, guides us through His Word to the things that we are to obey and then gives us the power of His Spirit to carry out the work that He has called each of us to do. As we help developing leaders begin to realize that Christ has created and gifted them in a unique way, because He has a particular work for them to do, they will have a sense of expectancy as they yield their lives to Christ so that He can work through their lives. They will find great joy in their lives as they learn to walk in obedience to the way that the Lord is leading them.

Remember, we do not tell people what God has called them to do. Instead, we help them search the Word and become obedient to the Word so that the Lord is able to show them what He has for them to do. That way, the Lord is able to guide them step by step as He closes and opens doors for them

– Acts 16:6-10. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders develop a plan of action for their lives.

Learning to Help People Put their Plan of Action into Action

In our last topic, we talked about helping people develop a plan of action for their lives. It is one thing to develop a plan of action. However, for that plan of action to be effective, a person has to learn how to put their plan of action into action. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Many Christians try to serve the Lord in their own strength. We can be very busy when we try to serve in our own strength. However, we accomplish nothing when we are doing it in our own strength. The night before His crucifixion, Christ told the disciples in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” From this verse we might ask the question, does Christ want us to be busy Christians or fruitful Christians? When we get to heaven Christ will never ask us how busy we were. However, He will ask about our fruitfulness. Therefore, we need to help developing leaders learn to put their plan of action into action in the strength that Christ provides rather than their own strength.

In Acts 1:4-5, 8 we read, “And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ *He said*, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ “...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In these verses, Christ told the disciples that they would not be effective unless they learned to serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of their own strength. That is the key to helping a developing leader put a plan of action into action.

In the first seven chapters of Romans, the Holy Spirit is mentioned once. Then, in chapter 8, the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times. Look at the contrast between the end of chapters 7 and 8. The last twelve verses of Romans 7 use the words, I, me, my and myself 37 times (this is the passage on “I” trouble and not the kind that requires glasses). Verses 18 and 19 summarize the problem, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice.” Then, verse 24 tells how we feel when we depend on our own strength, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

In contrast, Romans 8 ends in a very different way. Verses 35-39 tell us, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As we learn to depend on the Holy Spirit for strength to serve the Lord, we see that we are more than conquerors through Christ. We also see that we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

One of the things that happened when we became Christians is that Christ set us free – Galatians 5:1, 13. Christ also emphasized this thought as He spoke to His disciples in John 8:31-32 and 36, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’” The key is to understand what that freedom does for us.

True freedom gives us the power to make choices. Before we became Christians, we were slaves to sin and so we sinned. The primary choices we made at that time were which sins to commit. We did not have the power to obey Christ because we were dead in trespasses and sins – Ephesians 2:1. However, as Christians we now have the power to make choices. Romans 6:13 and 16 tell us, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God... Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?”

We can share with developing leaders that we have now been set free. That freedom makes it possible for us to make choices and then carry out those choices. A Christian can make the choice to present himself to sin (by depending on self-effort instead of the strength that Christ provides). As we see here, when we present ourselves to sin, it leads to the death that we mentioned earlier in Romans 7:24. However, a Christian can also make the choice to present himself to God (by yielding to God and acting in the strength that Christ provides). These verses tell us that when we make the choice to yield to God we have the power to obey and that leads to righteousness. In the process, we act like Christ because we act in His strength.

A good illustration of this is found in Acts 4. Verse 13 tells us, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Peter and John were just as bold in front of the religious leaders as Christ was when he stood in front of these same religious leaders. Then, in verses 19-20 we see that they realized that they had the power to act in the strength of the Lord, “But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:23-24 and 29-30 tell us what choice they made when they were released, “And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them... Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’” The Lord shows how He answered when the disciples depended on the strength of the Lord instead of their own strength. Verse 31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

We also model for developing leaders our own dependence on the Lord. As we invite them to spend time with us in prayer and see the Lord give us His strength to carry out His plan of action for our lives, the developing leaders will see that the Lord is working in our lives because we pray and depend on His strength. (They probably also see our lack of effectiveness when we depend on our own strength.) We also need to ask them to pray for us that we will be able to have the power to do what the Lord tells us to do. Paul illustrated this principle in Ephesians 6:18-20 where we read, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” At the same time, we also need to let them know that we are praying for them.

We also need to encourage developing leaders with what happened to Peter when he depended on his own strength. Christ warned him in Luke 22:31-33, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your

faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’” Then, we see the following actions on the part of Peter:

- ◆ He slept when Christ asked him to pray – Luke 22:45-46
- ◆ He tried to protect Christ in his own strength – Luke 22:50; John 18:10-11
- ◆ He followed Christ afar off – Luke 22:54
- ◆ He sat down among the enemies of Christ – Luke 22:55
- ◆ He denied Christ three times – Luke 22:57-61
- ◆ He went out and wept bitterly – Luke 22:62
- ◆ He decided his only option was to go back to fishing since he failed – John 21:1-3
- ◆ He was asked if he loved Christ more than the fish – John 21:15
- ◆ He was restored to effective ministry – John 21:15-17
- ◆ He listened the next time Christ told him his source of power – Acts 1:8, 14
- ◆ He was used by Christ greatly as He depended on Christ – Acts 2:1-41

The Lord gives us a great privilege as He sends us to help developing leaders develop a plan of action. It is also a great privilege to help them learn to depend on the power of Christ to put that plan of action into action. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to serve the Lord in the power of the Lord instead of their own strength.