

7. Developing the Attitude Shifts that Are Needed to Develop Structure

In our last two topics, we have seen how the early church developed the structure to develop reproducing Christians. However, there is another key that is important in the development of structure. That is a change in certain attitudes of those who are already leaders. That will be the focus of our topic today.

The first attitude that we need to understand is the way that we see people. As we look at people, do we see their problems, or do we see their potential? A great illustration of this is found, in John 4, where Christ ministered to the Samaritan woman. Ask yourself, “Did the disciples see the problems of the woman, or did they, like Christ, see the potential of the woman?” John 4:27 says, “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?’” Since they marveled at the fact that Christ would even talk with her, they certainly did not see her potential.

Although she had not yet found out how to have living water (John 4:14-18), Christ saw her potential. Christ used that potential to transform a whole town. In just a short time, Christ had totally changed her priorities, as she left her water pot even though she had originally come for water. He changed her attitudes, since she wondered at first why He would even talk with her. He changed her thinking of worship from worship being a place where we worship to worshiping God in spirit and truth. He introduced her to the fact that He is Christ. He changed her character. He equipped her to tell others how to find Christ. He saw many believe because of her witness. He saw many more believe after she introduced them to Christ.

How could Christ see the potential of a woman that had five husbands and was now living unmarried with a sixth? The answer to that is found in Ephesians 3:20-21. Those verses say, “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.” Christ knew His power to change and transform that woman, or any other person. We have to change our attitude so that we see that Christ is able to do:

- exceedingly
- abundantly
- above all we can ask
- above all we can understand or perceive with our mind
- because it is His power that changes and transforms lives

In order to see people as Christ sees people, we need to realize that every person we share the Gospel with may have the potential to be another Paul once the power of Christ begins to change and transform that person’s life. If Christ could change a woman that much in one hour, how much can He change a person over a period of months and years? We need to see people as Christ saw people.

A second attitude we need to understand is the way we measure success. Do we measure success by numbers, or do we measure success by transformed lives? This is illustrated for us so well, by

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Christ, in John 6. At the beginning of that chapter, Christ fed the five thousand, and they came back for more food the next day. Christ spent most of chapter six telling the people what it cost to be His disciple. Many people quickly made a choice. John 6:66-68 says, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” In one chapter, Christ went from five thousand to twelve, and He said that one of the twelve had a devil.

Christ chose to measure success by transformed lives. As a result, although Christ did minister to the multitudes over the last twenty-one months of His public ministry, His focus was on the transformation of the twelve (minus one). Christ summarized that ministry as He prayed to the Father, in John 17:4, the night before His crucifixion. “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Christ actually measured success in two ways. First, He had glorified the Father. Second, He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do, and that was to transform the lives of eleven men. Do you measure your success by numbers, or by transformed lives?

A third attitude we need to understand is the goal that Christ has for our ministry. Is our goal to have a ministry that the world calls “successful” or is our goal to equip others for the ministry Christ has called them to? If our goal is to be successful, we will develop a structure that is centered around our personality. If our goal is to equip others for the ministry Christ has called them to, we will develop a structure that gives each person the opportunity to develop their full potential for Christ. In Colossians 1:28, Paul said that his goal was to present every man complete in Christ. That verse says, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” The word that is translated “perfect” means *full-grown or mature*. Paul made it his goal to help every Christian become a mature Christian. That should be our goal also.

Spiritual maturity involves three key areas: what we are, what we know, and what we do. First is what we are, or what we are becoming, as far as our character is concerned. Paul explained his goal for every Christian in the area of character. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 says, “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” In these verses, we see that we are to grow so that we increase and abound in love. We grow and increase in love as we learn to take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). As we grow and abound in love toward others, that makes it possible for Christ to establish our hearts blameless in holiness before God when Christ comes for us. Godly character develops as we show people how to take root in the love of Christ.

Philippians 2:15 says, “That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” In this verse, we see that growth in godly character helps us to become blameless and harmless so that we live without fault, even though we live among sinful people in a sinful world.

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The result of this godly character is that our lives shine as lights in the world. Paul made it his goal to help every Christian grow in godly character.

Second, we are to develop a structure to help every Christian become mature in their knowledge of Christ and His Word. Growth in the knowledge of His Word happens as we grow in our knowledge of the Bible and learn how to apply it to our lives. Paul knew that Christ wanted him to help people become familiar with the whole Word of God. Acts 20:27 says, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” Paul wanted them to become familiar with the whole Word of God, because Paul knew that was necessary for each Christian to become mature.

Growth in the knowledge of Christ happens through fellowship with Christ, and with other Christians. John wrote to explain this in the following verses. 1 John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” We grow in our fellowship with Christ as we walk in His light by sharing our lives with Him. That is why we must develop a structure so that those we lead can see how we develop our fellowship with Christ, and with them.

Third, we are to develop a structure that provides opportunities for every Christian to develop their ministry skills. Peter gives us some keys to develop ministry skills in 1 Peter 4:9-11. Those verses say, “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

In these verses, we see that ministry skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to use their homes for hospitality. Speaking skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to share the Word of God with one another. Ministry or serving skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to use their serving gifts to serve one another in the strength God supplies.

Here, we see that we need to develop church structure so that it provides opportunities for people to spend time with one another, so they can minister to one another both by word and by action. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop church structure that will give every Christian opportunities to minister, both to those who are not yet Christians and also to those who are Christians.