

9. Transforming Lives Through Leadership Development

In our last topic, we said that our goal, in developing a church structure, is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church, from the day that it began, in Acts 2. New believers continually began to meet in small groups to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47, we saw that those small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that those small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F - fellowship

L - leadership development

O - outreach

C - caring

K - knowledge

S - service

Today, we will be looking at how the structure of a small group can provide the ideal situation to begin leadership development. In Exodus 18:20, Moses was told how to develop the leadership that would share the leadership of an entire nation with him. That verse says, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” This verse lists the three areas in which a person must develop in order to become an effective spiritual leader. First, to become an effective spiritual leader, a person must grow in the knowledge of the Word of God. Second, an effective spiritual leader must grow in godly character. Third, an effective spiritual leader must develop the skills necessary to lead others. An evangelistic or follow-up Bible study group provides the ideal small group for all three of these things to begin to happen.

Since the purpose of the Bible study is not to show Bible knowledge, but to transform the thinking and lives of those in the Bible study, this means that as you lead a small group in Bible study, you ask questions and encourage them to ask questions. Christ illustrated this so well by the way He guided the thinking of the religious leaders in Jerusalem when He was only twelve years old. Luke 2:46-47 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. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” In these verses, we see that Christ did three things that helped the religious leaders learn from a boy. Christ:

- sat in the midst of the teachers – He was sitting with them, instead of standing above them
- listened to them – He listened to them and did not just expect them to listen to Him
- asked them questions – He had the attitude of a learner

As a result of doing those three things, when Christ spoke, those adults, who were religious teachers themselves, were astonished at both the understanding and the answers of Christ. We will be most effective in encouraging a small group to ask their questions if we sit with them instead of standing above them. In most cultures, when a person stands to speak, a group becomes an audience listening to a speaker instead of participating in a discussion. Because Christ listened

carefully to what these teachers were saying, they were ready to listen to Him when He spoke. Christ showed them that He had a learner's attitude by asking questions, so they also felt free to ask Him questions. As a result, they were amazed as He explained things to them. We begin the leadership development process when we change people from an audience to participants.

However, something much greater is also happening. As a group discusses the meaning of Scripture together, and are led to find their answers in the Bible, instead of the opinions of the group, they begin to learn to think Biblically. Your example, as a leader here, is very important. When a question is asked, do not respond by giving an answer. Instead say, "Let's see what the Word of God says about that question." Have the group turn to a Bible passage that discusses that question. Read the verses. Then, have the group discuss what God says is the answer to that question. Over a period of time, the group will begin to realize that the Bible has answers to their questions. They will also learn what Bible passages to turn to when others ask them the same questions.

If you do not know what Bible passage to have the group read, write down the question and tell the group that you will find a Biblical passage that speaks about that question before the next time you get together. Tell them you will come prepared the next time with a Bible passage that will help them answer their question. The next time, repeat the question, read the Bible passage that applies, and then, have the group find the answer to the question from the Word of God. Remember that Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God will help each person discover the thoughts and intents of their own hearts rather than just listening to the opinions of others.

The second basic key thing you want to do in an evangelistic or follow-up Bible study is show people, by your own example, the way to walk. A person will never be an effective spiritual leader unless that person is an example of godly character. That is one of the great differences between a godly leader and a worldly leader. A worldly leader drives others by authority and power, because he tells people what to do. Mark 10:42 says, "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.'" A worldly leader tells people what to do, because he is focused on reaching his goals for worldly success.

A godly leader leads by godly character and example because he is showing people how to live and walk to please the Lord. He is modeling what he is sharing as he shows people by his own godly character. Christ said, in Mark 10:43-45, "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." Here, we see that a godly leader leads by serving others and helping them develop their full potential to carry out the ministry God has prepared for each individual. A godly leader is not focused on his own success. Instead, he is focused on serving and equipping each Christian to carry out the ministry God has prepared for each Christian.

The third basic thing you want to do in a follow-up Bible study is to help each person in the group begin to develop ministry skills. Some of that development happens right in the group. Other parts of ministry development happen outside the group as you take two or three people from the group with you as you minister to others. As those in the group begin to grow in their understanding of Scripture, each week, begin to have one or two prepare to explain two or three verses at the next Bible study. Gradually give them a larger group of verses to explain. At the same time, take time to show them how to study and prepare. Your goal is to help everyone in the group grow in their ministry skills, to the point where they can lead a Bible study with others.

In Acts 1:15, we see that there were one hundred and twenty disciples. There is no mention of disciples again until we come to Acts 6. Acts 6:1a says, “Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying...” Then, Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Between Acts 1 and Acts 6, there is a period of about six or seven years. During that period, each of the hundred and twenty disciples were able to help a group of new disciples develop, so that the number of spiritual parents multiplied. One of the basic skills we want each of the people in the Bible study group to develop is the ability to lead a Bible study group themselves. This will take time, but your goal, as a Bible study leader, is to reproduce yourself by developing a group of Bible study leaders.

After giving the three keys to develop spiritual leaders, in Exodus 18:20, Moses was given another instruction. Exodus 18:21-22 says, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.” In these verses, we see that Moses was told that the basic unit for a group leader to lead was a group of ten.

Acts 6 says that the number of disciples multiplied greatly. The difference between addition and multiplication is simple. If you train an assistant in a Bible study, you make possible the addition of one more leader. If instead, you help each person in the group develop, so that each one is able to lead a group of ten, then you have multiplied your ministry. Most Christians can be developed to lead a group of ten. You are also training them how to lead a group of ten by your example of leading the group and having them learn to participate. Because they have been shown, by example, they will also help others learn to participate. It is a great privilege to develop a small group so they become reproducing Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop a group of reproducing Christians.