

7. One-to-One Ministry-Equipping Bible Studies

In our last several topics, we have talked about various forms of one to one Bible studies to reach people for Christ and to help them grow. Today, we will be talking about another form of one to one Bible study – the ministry-equipping Bible study. In 2 Timothy 2:2, we read, “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 four spiritual generations:

1. Paul
2. Timothy
3. Faithful men
4. Others

In this verse, we see that Paul commissioned Timothy to equip faithful men who would be able to teach others also. Paul was delegating to Timothy the responsibility to train faithful men so that they in turn were equipped to teach others. This was the same thing that Christ did with the disciples when He said to them, in John 20:21, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” The thing that He was sending them to do was to Make Disciples among all the nations (ethnic groups). The same form of the word that is translated “Make Disciples” in Matthew 28:19 is also found in Matthew 13:52, where we find the Biblical definition of a disciple. That verse tells us, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.” In this verse, we see that a disciple:

1. Has become a disciple
2. Is like the head of a spiritual household (has one or more spiritual children)
3. Has a treasure (the Word of God)
4. Brings out of that treasure things that are new (is continuing to learn and grow)
5. Brings out of that treasure things that are old (can teach the basics of Christianity)

That Biblical definition of a disciple is a key to understand the meaning of one-to-one ministry-equipping Bible studies. A one-to-one equipping Bible study is a Bible study designed to equip a person to be the head of a spiritual household, who has a treasure, is continuing to learn and grow and is able to teach others the basics of Christianity. These things do not happen automatically.

Christ and Paul both give us ideal examples of a ministry-equipping Bible study. In Mark 1:17, Christ said, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Paul did exactly the same thing with Timothy as Acts 16:2-3a tell us, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” In both of these passages, we see that a ministry-equipping Bible study is actually on-the-job training where the student goes with the teacher as the teacher ministers to others. This is probably the most neglected form of Bible study today as the church has focused on telling people how to minister, instead of showing people how to minister.

A perfect illustration of a one-to-one ministry-equipping Bible study happened right in the middle of Christ teaching the five thousand. In John 6:5b-7, we see Christ giving Philip a ministry-equipping Bible study, “He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But

this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” There were five thousand people gathered around Christ, and He was teaching Philip a personal lesson. Philip failed to answer the question and gave a financial report instead. He told Christ that they couldn’t minister to those people, because they did not have the money. Christ saw the opportunity while Philip saw the problem.

One of the lessons Philip had to learn in order to serve the Lord effectively was to depend on the Lord, instead of himself. In fact, Christ later told all of 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.” Philip learned that day that if he would see the opportunity, Christ would show how to solve the problem.

Christ also used ministry-equipping Bible studies to help expand the vision of the disciples. It was in Samaria that Christ said to the disciples, in John 4:35, “‘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!’”

Later, in Samaria, Christ taught another short equipping Bible study to expand the vision of His disciples. That Bible study is recorded in Luke 9:52-56, where Jesus “sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to *save them*.’ And they went to another village.” The disciples were able to expand their vision and began to see people as Christ saw them because of these equipping Bible studies.

Paul also developed others by having ministry-equipping Bible studies with those he took with him in his travels. This is illustrated so well in 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 where Paul says, “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. 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 what Timothy would teach because they had discussed these things as they traveled together.

Jesus also taught the disciples how to minister to children through a ministry-equipping Bible study. Again, this happened as Christ taught the disciples a specific lesson, while a larger crowd of people was present. Christ showed the disciples how to minister to children in Matthew 19:13-15, where we read: “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.”

One of the things you notice about ministry-equipping Bible studies is that they usually happen in the process of ministry. Through the years, I have often taken one or two men with me as I have gone to share the Gospel with people in their homes. Then, on the way home, we would stop for a coke or a cup of coffee and discuss the Biblical principles that had been demonstrated that night. That was also a common way that Christ taught His disciples. In Mark 4:33-34, we read, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear *it*. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” Christ did not explain the parables to the crowds. However, when He was alone with the disciples, He would explain all things to them.

Paul gave the elders of Ephesus a summary of his ministry-equipping Bible studies when he said to them, in Acts 20:20-21, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul did have public equipping Bible studies with the men who became the leaders in Ephesus. However, he also took them with him from house-to-house so that he could show them how to minister effectively to people where they lived, worked and spent their free time.

Today, the most neglected form of Bible study is probably the ministry-equipping Bible study to show people how to minister to others. People have heard the Bible taught, but they have not been shown how to minister to other people where they live, work and spend their free time. This form of Bible study was the focus of the ministry of Christ. Mark 3:13-14 tells us, “And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Luke 6:12 tells us that this happened after Christ had spent the entire night in prayer. From these two passages, we learn some important lessons about ministry-equipping Bible studies. We see that:

- ◆ Christ prayed to the Father about the men in whom He would invest His time to carry on His work
- ◆ Christ called those men to Him
- ◆ Christ asked them to spend an increased amount of time with Him
- ◆ Christ chose them so they might be with Him
- ◆ Christ chose them so that later, He could send them out to preach

In whom are you investing your time in ministry-equipping Bible studies by taking them with you and equipping them to minister by example? Those individuals who travel with you will become your Timothys. May the Lord richly bless you as you focus on developing individuals through ministry-equipping Bible studies that happen as your Timothys travel with you in ministry.