

### 13. Developing a Personal Strategy as a Ministry Skill

When Christ began His ministry, He had a strategy that guided Him throughout His ministry. As Christ called the disciples to follow Him, Christ also began to help them develop a strategy for their future ministry. In the same way, we want to help developing leaders develop a strategy that will guide them throughout their ministry. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Christ had known the disciples for about a year when He called them in Mark 1:17-18. “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” In this call, Christ gave us three principles He was using to help those men begin to learn to develop a personal strategy. Christ said:

- “follow me” – Christ knew that they would develop a strategy by observing Him
- “I will make you” – Christ promised to develop something in their lives
- “you will become fishers of men” – Christ told them that they would learn some life changing principles for their lives

First, Christ knew that the only way that the disciples would develop a strategy for their lives was to observe Him as He carried out His strategy. As they observed, they would see that He had a purpose for everything that He did. By His actions, Christ showed them the things that are important if they wanted their lives to have an impact on others. One of the things they were going to see was that Christ chose to invest His life in the twelve men that chose to follow Him, rather than the multitudes. In the same way, our impact on the next generation will come through the people we choose to invest our lives in.

Second, Christ promised to develop something in the lives of these men. Christ said He would help them become something that was not presently true in their lives. Christ calls us to do the same thing in the lives of each of those we are developing. Paul explained how people become something that is not presently true in their lives. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” We help people develop a strategy for their lives as we invite them to imitate us. However, this verse gives us one qualification for that to happen. We must be making it our goal to imitate Christ. This is the difference between busyness and effectiveness. Busyness is keeping ourselves busy. Effectiveness is inviting people to spend time with us so they can learn to imitate us as we imitate Christ.

Third, Christ told the disciples they would become fishers of men. A person is not an effective Christian leader if he has not become a fisher of men, because he can never show others how to fish for men if he is not fishing himself. At this point, Christ did not tell these men how they would catch men, but He did promise them that they would learn to fish for men. In fact, the two men Christ gave this call to became effective at fishing for men in two different ways. Every time we see Andrew in the book of John, he is bringing someone to Christ. In John 1:42, he brought his brother to Christ. In John 6:8-9, he brought a young boy to Christ. In John 12:20-22, Andrew brought some Greeks to Christ. In Acts 2:14-41, we see that Peter preached and three thousand people came to Christ. We might say that Christ taught Andrew how to fish for men with a hook and a line, while he taught Peter to fish for men with a big net.

Christ defined a disciple for them, in Matthew 13:52, as a part of helping these men develop a strategy for their lives. “Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.’” The word that is translated “instructed” here is the same word that is translated “Make Disciples” in Matthew 28:19. In these verses, we see that a disciple is one who:

- ◆ is instructed concerning the kingdom of God – can explain to others how to become a Christian (a part of that kingdom)
- ◆ is the head of a spiritual household (a householder) – has one or more spiritual children
- ◆ is one who has a treasure – the Word of God
- ◆ is able to bring out of that treasure things that are new – has a learner’s attitude so that he is continuing to learn new things from the Word of God
- ◆ is able to bring out of that treasure things that are old – is able to teach others the basics of Christianity

Later, Christ told the disciples that an effective personal strategy for life involves more than just becoming fishers of men. In John 21:15-17, Christ told Peter, and the other disciples, “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” In these verses, we see the following:

- effective ministry is based on loving Christ more than things
- effective ministry involves feeding Christ’s lambs
- effective ministry involves tending Christ’s sheep
- effective ministry involves feeding Christ’s sheep

First, Christ showed that a developing spiritual leader will only have an effective ministry when it is based on loving Christ rather than things. Peter had to make a choice about what he loved the most. Did he love Christ or did he love fish? Today, the world focuses on success. The world usually measures success by things. Many Christians have accepted the thinking of the world. Here, Christ showed Peter that He wanted effectiveness rather than success. That effectiveness would only happen as Peter loved Christ more than things.

Second, Christ said that an effective ministry is based on feeding Christ’s lambs (new Christians). The disciples had to first become fishers of men, who were reaching people for Christ. Then, they needed to learn how to feed those new Christians. Unless new Christians are fed properly, they will not experience healthy growth. Every developing spiritual leader, whether he is sharing one to one with a new Christian, teaching a Bible study or is one of the leaders of a church, needs to learn how to feed new Christians effectively.

Third, Christ said that an effective ministry is based on shepherding Christ’s sheep. Notice that

the sheep are Christ's sheep, not the possession of the person shepherding them. In the definition of a disciple, we saw that every disciple is a householder (head of a spiritual household). To be the head of a spiritual household, a person must have one or more spiritual children he or she is investing his or her life in. Just as a loving shepherd tenderly cares for his sheep, a loving spiritual parent will tenderly care for spiritual children and help them grow to maturity.

Fourth, Christ said that an effective ministry is based on feeding Christ's sheep. We feed the new Christians to help them begin to grow. However, that is not the end of our feeding ministry. Once a new Christian becomes a growing Christian, we want to feed him, so he matures and learns to serve others. As he continues to mature, we also want to show him how to become a spiritual parent to one or more Christians.

One of the things that an effective personal strategy of ministry does is help a developing leader focus on the development of healthy reproducing Christians. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul told Timothy, "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." Here, we see four spiritual generations: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also. Each developing leader, who develops such a strategy, will see the Lord multiply his ministry far beyond what he ever dreamed the Lord would do through him. That is due to the fact that such ministry now involves multiplication rather than addition.

In Matthew 28:19-20, we read, "'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 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." That commission was given to all Christians, not just a select few. When we help a growing Christian develop a personal plan to obey that command, by developing a personal strategy about the way the Lord will use him or her to make disciples, we both multiply our ministry and their ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders develop a personal strategy as a ministry skill.