

2. Developing Ministry Skills Through Observation

In our last topic, we saw that Christ invited the Twelve, and many others, to come and spend time with Him. In fact, we saw that the Twelve spent time with Christ for about twenty-one months, before they were chosen to be the Twelve. During the first year, they were just invited to be with Christ, so they could observe Him. Today, we are going to see some of the things Christ wanted the disciples to learn through just observing Him. One of the key things that happened, during this time, was that Christ built a relationship of trust with those who followed Him.

We see that the first recorded thing the disciples did with Christ was observe Him in a social situation. In John 2:1-12, Christ and His disciples were invited to attend a wedding. There are two things that we want to notice that relate to observation. John 2:2 says, “Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.” Here, we see that the disciples had the opportunity to go along with Christ and observe. Then, John 2:11 says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” Other individuals did not even know that Christ had performed a miracle. However, the disciples had observed it and it caused them to believe in Christ. As we give people the opportunity to observe us in social situations, they will learn a lot about our character.

The next recorded thing the disciples did with Christ was to go with Him to the Passover in Jerusalem. That meant that they traveled along the road together for several days as they went from Galilee to Jerusalem and later returned to Galilee. They also saw Christ cleanse the temple. They heard Him say that He would raise up “this temple” in three days. John 2:21-22 says, “But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”

Just as the disciples remembered, several years later, what Christ had said, as we take others with us, they will remember what we said when they are asked the same questions in a few years. Here, we see an example of the fact that people learn what to say to others as they observe what we say to others in various situations. The more time they spend observing us in ministry, the better they will be equipped to answer the questions people ask them in the future.

While they were in Jerusalem on this trip, Nicodemus came to visit Jesus one evening. Since John wrote in great detail about this visit, in John 3:1-21 (twenty-one verses out of a total of eight hundred and seventy-nine in the entire book), he and some of the other disciples were probably there listening that evening. They had the opportunity to see how Christ explained the Gospel very clearly to one who was depending on his works to save himself. They learned very quickly that even the most religious person can depend on the wrong things for eternal life.

Growing Christians will learn how to explain the Gospel clearly as they hear us explain the Gospel to others. They will also observe how we use illustrations from the Bible to make the Gospel clear. These illustrations will become very familiar to them, so they are equipped to share from the Word of God when they have opportunities to help people understand how to become Christians. A key

thing to remember is that, when it comes to sharing the Gospel or any other thing, the thoughts and ways of God are much better than our thoughts and ways. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

John 3:22 tells us that Jesus and His disciples spent time visiting various areas of Judea. During this time, the disciples had the opportunity to hear Christ share the Gospel with many people in the various towns. In fact, John 4:1-2 says, “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples).” In addition to hearing Jesus explain the Gospel many times, the disciples were given the opportunity to baptize those who responded to the message of Christ. Since the disciples had only been with Christ a short time, they were still learning what to share but they could participate by baptizing others.

John 4:3-4 goes on to say, “He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.” The Jews had strong feelings of prejudice toward the Samaritans. Christ needed to go through Samaria to begin to change that attitude in the life of the disciples, as well as to reach some of the Samaritans. In fact, Christ used this opportunity to really expand their vision. John 4:35-36 says, “‘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! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”’ The disciples had their vision expanded, and they also had the opportunity to hear that their lives could begin to have an eternal impact.

We also see that the disciples went into Sychar and brought back food to Jesus. Then, they saw the Samaritan woman go into Sychar and bring back many people who wanted to know more about Christ. The disciples had the opportunity to observe that the Samaritans needed Christ and were open to Christ. Five percent of the entire book of John is devoted to just this one event. John learned, through observation, the passion of Christ to reach the Samaritans. Later, John and Peter also went to Samaria – Acts 8:14-15, 25. In Acts, however, they were the ones who were sharing the Gospel with the Samaritans.

Christ also gave the disciples the opportunity to observe Him in Galilee. In Luke 4:14-15, we read, “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.” Christ began in Nazareth, but was rejected in His home town according to Luke 4:16-30.

Throughout this period that Christ was preaching in the synagogues in the various towns of Galilee, He made His headquarters in the town of Capernaum, according to Matthew 4:12-17. In fact, Luke 4:31-32 says, “Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.” Capernaum was very near the town where Peter, Andrew, James, and John lived. as well as Philip, and probably Nathanael (John 1:44). These verses tell us that Christ was teaching regularly in the

synagogue in Capernaum. In fact, Mark 1:29 tells us that Christ went out of this synagogue and into the house of Peter and Andrew.

Because these towns were so close together, the disciples had the opportunity to go along with Him to many of the towns of Galilee. This gave them the opportunity to hear Christ preach many times about the kingdom of God. They were observing what Christ said, and how He said what He said, in the various towns they visited. They were also seeing some of the miracles Christ performed.

In Luke 4:42-44, we read, “Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.’ And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.” In these verses, we read that Christ preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee. Then, in Luke 5:1-11 and Matthew 4:18-22, we see that Christ invited four fishermen to leave their fishing and become fishers of men.

During the first year, between the time that Christ first met the disciples in John 1, and when He called them to become fishers of men in Luke 5:1-11, these men had the opportunity to observe Christ in many different situations as He talked to people from many different backgrounds. The primary way they participated during this time was by baptizing others who became followers of Christ (John 4:2). Other than that, they were given the opportunity to learn primarily through observation.

In the same way, Christ wants us to take Christians along with us, as we share the Gospel and minister in other ways, so these Christians can learn what to share, and how to share, through observation. One of the best places to teach Christians how to explain the Gospel from the Word of God is to go with them to the homes of their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances. As we go with them, they will see how we share the Gospel with the people for whom they have a great concern. They will also have the opportunity to share the joy as some of those people place their trust in Christ. In addition, they will also be learning how to share the Gospel by observation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help people develop ministry skills through observation.