

6. Developing Ministry Skills Through Doing and Reporting – Part 3

In our last two topics, we have seen how Christ developed ministry skills in the twelve as He sent them out to minister and then had them report after they returned. Today, we will look at the ministry of a larger group and how Christ helped them develop ministry skills through doing and reporting.

In Luke 10:1, we read, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” We see, here, that there were others who Christ spent time with, in addition to the twelve. Here, we see that Christ sent out a much larger group than He did when He sent out the twelve. This first verse tells us one other thing. The seventy were also preparing the people of these cities for a visit from Christ in the near future.

Although this may not seem important, it is very significant. The seventy had not been with Christ nearly as much as the twelve. As a result, they were not prepared to answer as many questions. However, because they knew that Christ would soon visit those cities and towns, they knew they could tell people that Christ would answer their questions when He came. One of the greatest fears people have as they share the Gospel with others is that they might not be able to answer the questions that are asked. Here, we see that Christ was providing the back-up the seventy needed as they shared the Gospel. In the same way, we need to be the back-up for those we send out to minister.

Before giving the seventy their instructions, Christ also took the time to expand their vision by telling them to notice certain things. These things are given in Luke 10:2, “Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” We see what the seventy were to see and do as they visited the various cities:

- ♦ they were to see that the harvest was great
- ♦ they were to see the shortage of laborers
- ♦ they were to respond to this shortage by praying
- ♦ they were to ask the Lord to send out laborers
- ♦ they were to recognize that it is His harvest

First, the seventy had to see the size of the harvest. Today, many Christians can drive through a major city, yet never see the people. Instead, they notice the buildings, the businesses, and everything else, but never see the people with eyes of compassion. Before Christ sent out the twelve earlier, He made a very similar statement to them. However, Matthew 9:36 tells us what Christ saw before He making the statement. That verse says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Only when developing leaders really begin to see people will they be moved with compassion for them. That was why Christ wanted the seventy to see that the harvest was great.

Second, the seventy needed to see the shortage of laborers sharing the message of the kingdom of God. It is one thing to hear about the shortage of laborers. It has a much greater impact when people see the shortage and realize how few there are who are sharing the Gospel. However, in order to see that shortage, people have to look so that they notice that there are few laborers. Christ wanted the seventy to really notice the shortage of laborers.

Third, the Lord told them what they were to do as they saw this shortage of laborers. The seventy were not told to begin a recruiting program to try to get more people to volunteer to be laborers. Instead, they were to begin by praying to the Lord of the harvest and ask Him to send laborers into His harvest. One of the key things that developing spiritual leaders need to learn is that the Lord is the true recruiter. As we help people to see the harvest, and see the shortage of workers, the Lord will often give those very people the desire to become laborers in His harvest. In fact, every person who goes out for a short term of ministry should be told to look for two things – the size of the harvest and the number of laborers.

Fourth, Christ told the seventy what to ask for as they prayed. They were to ask the Lord to send out laborers. When we recruit, many quickly become discouraged and drop out. When the Lord recruits laborers, He puts such a passion for ministry in the hearts of people that they only find real fulfillment in their lives when they respond in obedience to the Lord and carry out the ministry He has for them. One of the greatest impacts that happens in people's lives as they pray, and ask the Lord to send out laborers, is that the Lord gives them a passion for ministry.

Fifth, we want developing leaders to recognize that the harvest is the Lord's harvest, not theirs. One of the problems, today, is the fact that many Christians measure success by the number of people who follow them. If we help developing spiritual leaders focus on effectiveness rather than success, then they can focus on being obedient to the Lord, instead of looking for success. Obedience to the Lord means that we focus on making disciples instead of filling a building. Matthew 13:52 defines a disciple as one who:

- has become the head of a spiritual household – a reproducing Christian
- has a treasure – the Word of God
- is able to bring out of that treasure things that are new – is continuing to learn new things
- is able to bring out of that treasure things that are old – is able to teach the basics of Christianity

If a spiritual leader is focused on making disciples, he is taking a few people along with him and showing them what to say and how to minister, just as Christ did. If developing leaders focus on success, they will tell people what to do. If developing leaders focus on effectiveness, they will be taking a few people with them and showing them what to do by what they do, and showing them what to say by what they say. Christ sent out the seventy to do what they had seen Him do and teach what they had heard Him teach.

In sending out the seventy, Christ gave very similar instructions to the instructions He had given the twelve. He did add one other thought. Luke 10:3 says, "Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves." The only way a lamb will survive among wolves is if the lamb stands behind the shepherd. By giving the seventy this specific instruction, Christ was telling them that

they would only be effective as they depended on Him.

In Luke 10:17, we read the report of the seventy when they returned. That verse says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’” Here, we see that the seventy saw that they were effective in dealing with demons, because they were depending on the Lord and not their own strength.

We see that Christ gave a very interesting answer, in Luke 10:18-20, “And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’” Christ had defeated Satan, so, He wanted His followers to know that He had also already defeated the demons who followed Satan. The seventy did not need to fear demons, as long as their dependence was on Christ. Christ reminded them that He is able to have all power over the enemy. In 1 John 4:4, we are promised, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

However, Christ also reminded the seventy that there was something much more important than the power to cast out demons. He reminded them that the most important thing was that their names were written in heaven. Here, we see a key lesson we want developing leaders to understand. It is very easy to focus on daily happenings. Christ wanted them to realize that much more important than the daily happenings was the fact that they had eternal life. This moved their focus from an immediate exciting event to the eternal results of their decision to follow Christ. We want to help developing leaders learn to clearly distinguish between what is temporary and what is eternal.

As we think about helping Christians who are developing as leaders, we see that it is a process. First, we take them with us so they can observe. Then, we give them the opportunity to participate with us. This is followed by opportunities for them to minister while we observe. After that, we send them out to minister and report back, so we know how to best continue to help them in their development. Through this process, three things happen (Exodus 18:20):

- they grow in Biblical knowledge
- they are shown how to grow in godly character
- they are shown how to grow in ministry skills

The Lord has given us a great privilege to develop godly reproducing leadership. As we are obedient to the command to make disciples, we will see the Lord multiply our ministry through the lives of each of those disciples. May the Lord richly bless you as you help growing Christians become reproducing Christians.