

9. Developing Ministry Skills by Reproduction

In our last two topics, we have focused on the fact that Christ helped the Twelve develop their ministry skills through joint participation with Christ. However, our ministry skills will be limited if we are not becoming reproducing Christians. Acts 8:1, 4 demonstrate a very important principle to us. Those verses say, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time, a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... ⁴Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

In these verses, we see that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. The other Christians were scattered because of persecution. Instead of persecution stopping the spread of the Gospel, persecution caused the Gospel to spread to many other areas. Acts 9:31 shows that the Gospel spread throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Acts 11:19-21 shows the Gospel beginning to spread in the area several hundred miles away. The Gospel also began to spread to other cultures. Those verses tell us, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” How did this happen?

First, Christ equipped the twelve to reproduce themselves. Then, the Twelve equipped other Christians to reproduce themselves. As we show others how to serve the Lord, that training is not complete until they know how to equip others to serve the Lord. Paul told Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:2, “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 that Paul focused on a second, third, and fourth generation of spiritual leadership – Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also. Paul had developed Timothy through:

Observation

Participation

Doing and Reporting

Joint Ministry

Reproductive ministry – 1 Corinthians 4:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:2

Now, Paul was telling Timothy to do the same thing with a next generation of spiritual leaders and equip them to develop the following generation. Many spiritual leaders do all the work and never show anyone else how to minister. When they die, they leave no one prepared for spiritual leadership. Some spiritual leaders tell people what to do, but do not show them how to serve the Lord in love. This will produce leaders who are driven by fear, instead of being led by the love of Christ. A few spiritual leaders show other Christians how to serve the Lord in love, but they do not show them how to reproduce themselves. Finally, there are a very small number of spiritual leaders who show Christians how to serve the Lord in love, and show them how to develop a third

and a fourth generation of spiritual leaders. That is what Christ calls us to do in 2 Timothy 2:2.

In Acts 6:1 and 7, we see that the number of disciples multiplied. In Acts 9:31, we see that the number of churches multiplied. In between those two passages is the statement mentioned in Acts 8:4, where we saw that those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. From this, we see that the goal that Christ has for us is for us to multiply disciples that the Lord can then use to multiply churches. In fact, that is our Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

That brings us to the question, How do we develop reproductive spiritual leaders? As we take people with us as we serve the Lord, we do at least the following things.

- ◆ We spend much time praying for those that we lead – Luke 6:12
- ◆ We continually help them focus on the next towns – Mark 1:38-39
- ◆ We take them with us to the next towns – John 4:1-8
- ◆ We continue to expand their vision – John 4:35
- ◆ We ask them questions to see what they understand – Matthew 16:13-16
- ◆ We give them further explanation of the things they don't understand – Luke 24:27
- ◆ We open their understanding to the Scriptures – Luke 24:45
- ◆ We teach them the importance of depending on the Holy Spirit – Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8
- ◆ We show them how to walk in the Spirit – Galatians 5:16, 25, be led by the Spirit – Galatians 5:18, be filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:18 so that their lives bear the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23.

Ephesians 4:11-13 also tells us something else that happens as people go along with us. Those verses say, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In these verses, we see that spiritual leaders are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

As people go along with you and observe, they will learn from your example. If you are effective at sharing the Gospel with others, they are being shown how to share the Gospel with others. If you are effective at ministering to people who are hurting in their personal lives, they are being shown how to minister to hurting people. If you are effective at making Biblical truth clear to others, they are being shown how to make Biblical truth clear. After you have ministered to others, take the time to let those who are with you share what they've learned as they watched you minister to others. At this point, you are equipping and showing them how to do the work of the ministry and they are observing and learning how they will minister in similar situations in the future.

As people go along with us in ministry situations, these verses also say that equipping the saints will result in building up the body of Christ. The people who are with us are growing in at least two ways. First, they are growing in their knowledge of the Word of God. Second, they are growing in their understanding of how to apply the Word of God to specific situations. At the same time, they are also seeing our dependence on the Lord as we minister. They will learn, from our example, the importance of depending on the Lord, not trying to serve in their own strength (as long as we are showing, by our example, the importance of depending on the Lord). As we

focus on equipping the saints for ministry, the Lord will continue to build the body.

Ephesians 4 also tells us that the goal of the Lord is to see every Christian become mature, not remain spiritual toddlers. As Christians mature, they learn to speak the truth in love. They also learn to recognize that Christ is the head and that they must depend on Him and not themselves. This results in every Christian learning to work effectively.

Ephesians 4:16 tells us the resulting effects when Christians learn to recognize Christ as the head, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” In these verses, we see that as Christians learn to recognize Christ as head:

- they are joined and knit together
- they each become like a joint that supplies what other parts of the body need
- they learn to work together effectively
- every part learns to do its share
- this causes growth in the body
- this causes the body to build itself up in love

From this verse, we see that Christ wants every Christian learn to function as a healthy part of the body. That does not happen automatically. Instead, it happens as we commit ourselves to show Christians how to function and serve the Lord rather than just tell them. Our example is so important, because individuals must see and experience love in order to know how to build others up in love. The disciples knew that Christ loved them, because they had experienced that love throughout all of the time they had walked with Him. In the same way, others will experience our love as we take them with us and show them how to become reproductive Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you show other Christians how to reproduce themselves in others.