

3. Healthy Churches Develop and Select Leaders – Part 2

In our last topic, we saw that Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to do two things. Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” In this verse, we see that Titus was to:

1. set in order the things that were lacking.
2. appoint elders in every church.

Our last topic focused on the first of these two things. This topic will focus on the second. These two things establish the foundation that helps a church become a healthy reproducing church. In our last topic, we saw that the first responsibility of Titus was to help men become qualified by his example. Today, we will focus on their appointment once men are qualified.

Paul gave us an example, in Acts 14:21-24, where we read: “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.” These verses show several things about the selection of the leadership team of a church.

In previous topics, we have discussed the fact that a disciple, by the definition of a disciple given in Matthew 13:52, has become the head of a spiritual household. That means that he is leading a small group in Bible study to help them in their spiritual growth. However, even though they were already leading a small group, Paul and Barnabas felt it was necessary to do three things to equip the men to be effective leadership teams. Paul and Barnabas chose to:

- strengthen the souls of the disciples.
- encourage the disciples to continue in the faith.
- prepare the disciples for many tribulations.

This brings us to the question: if men are already able to lead a small group, why do they need continued strengthening, encouragement, and preparation for tribulation? Christians continue to need these things as long as they live. Paul and Barnabas recognized that these men would need a team to do these three things once Paul and Barnabas left to minister in other places. This is one of several reasons we need a church leadership team, not just one person to lead a church. Another reason we need a team is due to the fact that no one person has all of the spiritual gifts, and every Christian needs the gifts of other Christians to have an effective reproducing ministry.

We see that once Paul and Barnabas had strengthened the disciples, encouraged them, and prepared them for tribulation, they appointed elders in every church. Here, we see that men, who were existing elders, recognized the additional men, who now also met the qualifications for spiritual leadership. Just as Christ had done with the eleven, they now recognized these men as qualified men and helped each church recognize them as qualified. After training the eleven for three-and-a-half years, Christ called them His friends, in John 15:15. “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that

I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Then, in John 20:17, He called them His brethren, and in verse 21 told them, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Christ called the eleven friends and brethren and made them full partners in ministry.

In each church Paul and Barnabas established, they recognized those men that had become qualified as friends and full partners in ministry. Later, that same recognition was given to Timothy when Paul asked him to become a part of the team with Paul and Silas as they went out to establish new churches. 1 Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” The other elders laid their hands on Timothy and prayed for him and recognized him as a partner in ministry with Paul and Silas.

In the case of Timothy, it was the elders of the churches at Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium who had recognized the spiritual character of Timothy and recommended him to Paul. Acts 16:2-3a says, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him...” Here, we see that the leadership teams of several churches joined together to recommend Timothy to Paul and Silas as a man qualified to join their church planting team. These churches were also multiplying churches in their own area, as Acts 16:5 says, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” These churches were developing sister churches in their local area and became sending churches as they sent one of their own as a part of a team to start churches in other areas.

Here, in Acts 4:23, we see that Paul and Barnabas had done the same thing earlier in the churches at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. That verse says, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In each church, they appointed these elders after a time of prayer and fasting. The new leadership teams, in each church, were recognized by Paul and Barnabas and also by each church. There was a unity of spirit, because the churches had seen these men grow and become qualified for spiritual leadership. This is the pattern of healthy churches that become reproducing churches.

One of the key things to notice, about the church leadership teams Paul and Barnabas appointed, was the fact that they trusted these men to continue to lead the churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. After recognizing these teams, they commended them to the Lord, and believed that the Lord would work through each of those teams to help each church continue to grow and develop additional qualified men to become a part of a church leadership team. The verse that was quoted above, from Acts 16:5, shows that by the time Paul returned to this area several years later, the churches that had been established were now establishing new churches daily.

One of the things that made it possible for this to happen was the fact that the early church leaders knew what was of greatest importance in their work and ministry. Christ had demonstrated that His work was to develop the leadership team that would lead the church when He returned to heaven. The apostles had done the same thing in the church at Jerusalem as they had multiplied the number of disciples, and then expanded the leadership team. Paul and Barnabas had done the same thing in these cities, as they had developed the men who became the leadership team of every

church.

Every church leadership team that makes it their greatest importance to develop each person, so that new men are becoming qualified for the spiritual leadership team, will be a healthy church, because that priority will also mean that the church will have new leaders for the next generation. In addition, that church will also develop enough leaders that it will be able to reproduce itself in surrounding areas, and have leaders to send to other areas, just as the churches were doing in Acts 16:1- 5.

Each church that makes it a high priority to qualify additional men to become a part of the leadership team will see additional men develop. This is illustrated by both the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch. In Jerusalem, this is demonstrated, in Acts 6:3-7, where the church added seven more men to the leadership team. We see that, in spite of persecution, the church in Jerusalem continued to qualify additional men and expand the leadership team. Acts 15:4 says, “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.” Here, we see that the leadership team included elders as well as apostles.

The same thing happened in Antioch. In Acts 11:25-26, Barnabas brought Saul with him to Antioch to help teach the Christians. By Acts 13:1-2, we see that the leadership team had grown to include five men, and Barnabas and Saul were sent out from that church to start churches in other places. By the time Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, several years later, there were many others who were also on the leadership team. Acts 15:35 says, “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

Paul, and others, also made it their priority to develop the church leadership team in Ephesus and equipped them to develop others. Later, when Paul said his farewell to that leadership team, Paul reminded the elders of how he had trained them. Acts 20:20-21 says, “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 had trained this team by taking them with him as he ministered both publicly and from house-to-house. As a result, they developed godly character because they saw it modeled in the life of Paul and others. They also developed Bible knowledge and ministry skills as they saw how Paul ministered and also as they ministered with him. Christ has called all leaders to develop healthy reproducing churches. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example to others to help them develop godly character.