

7. Healthy Churches Develop Outreach Teams

During the first year of the ministry of Christ, many people followed Him and went with Him to various places. After a year of contact, Christ invited some of those, who had followed and gone with Him to various places, to follow Him, so they could learn how to become fishers of men. Then, between six and nine months later, Mark 3:13-14 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then, He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Here, we see that Christ trained His disciples by forming them into an outreach team. For the second half of the public ministry of Christ, this team traveled with Him everywhere He went.

From this we learn two key things. First, people are best trained in teams. This is true both in direct teaching as well as in on-the-job training. Even when Christ sent out the twelve, and later the seventy, He sent them out in teams. Second, people are best trained when they are trained through outreach ministry as a part of their total development. Today, we will see why these two things are so important in a church if that church wants to become a healthy reproducing church.

Once Christ chose the twelve, we see that He also established a new relationship with them. Mark 3:33-35 says, “But He answered them, saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’” Christ said that His disciples were now a part of His spiritual family, and they had the same privileges as His physical family. Christ was showing them that they were going to learn to function together as a team, and as a spiritual family. Learning to function as a team is a very important principle that is often neglected in the development of spiritual leadership. When Christ rose from the dead, John 20:17 tells us that the first thing Christ did was send Mary with a message to His brethren (disciples).

Once Christ chose the men who would be on the team, He began training them and working with them in a different way than He worked with the multitudes. Mark 4 begins with Christ teaching a great multitude of people while His disciples were with Him. Mark 4:2 says, “Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching.” Here, we see that Christ taught the multitude in parables. Mark 4:33-34 says, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” The crowds heard the parables, but Christ explained everything He taught to the twelve.

The multitudes saw what Christ did and heard what He taught. The twelve learned why Christ did what He did and gained a fuller understanding of what He taught explained as He explained it to them. Here, we see a principle that is important both in a local church as well as a small group that functions as an outreach team. The crowd will hear what is taught. However, both a church leadership team and an outreach team need to know why they do what they do. They also need to gain a fuller understanding of what we teach so they will be able to teach the same things to others at a later time.

The very same day Christ explained these parables to His disciples, Christ also taught them a very important lesson about how to function as a team. Christ got in a boat with the disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee. In order to teach the disciples how to function as a team, Christ chose to lie down in the back of the boat and go to sleep. Christ also chose to arrange for a great storm of wind causing great waves to fill the boat with water. The disciples had to work as a team to try to bail the water out of the boat. However, all of their efforts to work together as a team were not enough, and the boat became full of water.

Then, Mark 4:38 says, “But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’” We know that Christ did care, because He immediately rebuked the wind and calmed the sea. Then, Christ asked them a simple question. Mark 4:40 says, “But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’” To learn to function as a healthy team the disciples had to learn:

- that they could not lead effectively if they were controlled by fear
- that they could not lead effectively if they had no faith
- that they needed to continually recognize that Christ is the leader of the team

When they got to the other side of the sea, Christ showed them how destructive an evil team can be. When they got out of the boat, they were met by a man who had a legion of demons living in him. Christ wanted to show the disciples how to transform the lives of people. Mark 5:3-5 describes the condition of this man. We see that this man was self-destructive, and “had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.” This man was being destroyed by a team of demons.

We see that Christ showed the disciples that He is able to transform any person. After Christ cast out the legion of demons, Mark 5:15 describes what everyone saw happen to this man, “Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.” The disciples saw that this man was restored to his right mind and was now normal. They were only able to see this because they were the outreach team that was traveling with Christ and saw what He did as well as heard what He taught.

When they got back to the other side of the sea, Christ performed two other miracles to teach the disciples. Christ had a woman, who had been going to doctors for twelve years to find help for a physical problem but only getting worse, touch Him. Christ wanted to teach the disciples another lesson, so He allowed the woman to touch Him and be healed. Then, Christ asked, “Who touched my clothes?” Mark 5:31 says, “But His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, Who touched Me?’” The disciples had to learn that Christ was concerned about individuals, even in the middle of great crowds.

The second miracle was raising a young girl from the dead. Christ took only the father, mother,

and His disciples with him into the room. He then told the girl to arise. Mark 5:42 says, “Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” The disciples had to learn that Christ can give both physical and spiritual life and that He is the only One who can give life. Again, these were lessons that could only be taught as the disciples traveled with Him as an outreach team.

Next, we see that Christ taught the disciples to function as teams by sending them out in teams of two. At the same time, He taught them that He would supply their needs, because He told them to take no food, no money, and no extra clothes. Here, we see that some lessons are best taught through on-the-job training. As these teams went out, Mark 6:12 tells us, “So they went out and preached that people should repent.” Then, Mark 6:30 tells what happened when they returned, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” Here, we see that Christ had them minister and then report back to tell Him what they had done and what they had taught.

One of the things we see, here, is that the primary purpose of sending outreach teams is to train them and give them the opportunity to gain experience sharing the Gospel and need for repentance with others. They do have a real impact in the lives of others and that provides an extra blessing. However, the most important thing that happens is that they gain experience and learn how to share the Gospel as a team. The disciples also gained a greater understanding of what they learned as they explained, to Christ, what they had done and taught.

A second lesson that is important in the development of every team is that they learn that the Lord will supply their needs. Christ sent those teams without extra food, money, or clothing, so they could learn that He would supply their needs. Many Christians are fearful of reaching out to new areas, because they have never learned that the Lord will supply their needs. That lesson can be taught by sending out outreach teams for short periods where they are forced to learn to depend on the Lord to supply their needs. That is one way they learn that the Lord provides what is needed.

Outreach teams provide an ideal way to train people and help them to grow in their understanding of the fact that the Lord can work both in their lives and through their lives. Teams also help people learn to work together and see that the Lord is able to multiply what happens as they work together. Outreach teams also provide an ideal opportunity to help people understand why we do what we do and help them gain greater understanding of the things they hear taught in larger groups. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop outreach teams, so you can show Christians how to serve the Lord in many different situations.